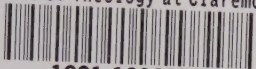


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# THE HERITAGE OF THE SPIRIT

*M. Petting:*

## PREACHERS OF THE AGE



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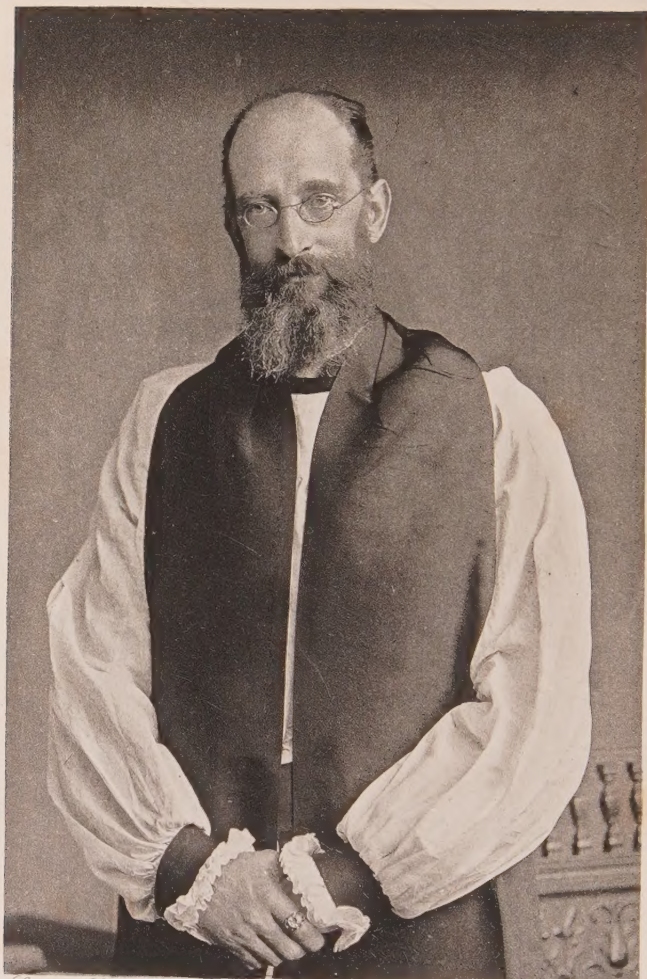
# Preachers of the Age

*THE LORD BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH*









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# THE HERITAGE OF THE SPIRIT

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

MANDELL *Creighton*

BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH

LONDON

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & COMPANY  
*LIMITED*

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(Preached before the University of Oxford.)

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THE HERITAGE OF THE SPIRIT.



# THE HERITAGE OF THE SPIRIT.

*(Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral.)*

“And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.”—2 KINGS ii. 9.

THERE is something very touching in this last scene of Elijah's life, and his last farewell to his disciple. The old man knew that his days were drawing to an end, and that he was walking on his last earthly journey. It was but natural that the memory of his life should rise before him, and that its struggles and difficulties should pass before his eyes. He had lived in perilous and stormy times ; he had laboured much and suffered much. He had fought bravely, as became a faithful soldier of the Lord ; but the fight had been a hard one, and had left the marks of many scars. In the heat of the conflict his soul had waxed fierce and uncharitable within him ; his zeal for the Lord had mixed with his own fiery temper, and had filled him with undue exaltation in the hour of triumph. He had gloried in the intoxication of the brief hour when awe-struck multitudes bowed before him, and owned the greatness of his mission. He had formed overstrained expectations, and when these were disappointed, his faith began to totter,

and he was too easily disheartened. In anguish of heart he had to learn his own nothingness, and had to remake his spiritual being on deeper trust in God, on greater self-denial and self-forgetfulness. With the weight of his experience upon him, he saw his end approaching. (With the deep sympathy that came from a sense of his own infirmities and failures, he gazed on the eager face of his disciple. He longed, before his voice was still for ever on earth, to be of some service to him. He longed to spare him, if so it might be, some of his own sorrows and trials, to leave him some part of the legacy which he had gained.) How was he to do so? What could he best bequeath? What did the young man need? What want did he most feel? With yearning heart Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee."

Now, mark Elisha's answer. It shows that he had already apprehended the goal of life, the object of endeavour. There was no thought of self, or of self-pleasing. There was no request to be spared hardships, to be supplied with external helps, to find a more secure position in which to labour. There was no demand for Elijah's legacy of good advice, of experience, of warnings. The young man's answer showed that he had already learned this without asking. (He knew the greatness of his master's heart; he knew its nobility and grandeur. He appreciated its troubles and its trials; he recognized their permanent results. In the silent sympathy of daily companionship he had absorbed the contents of the records of his master's soul. He knew, and loved, and venerated him. He thought of nothing better, he wished for nothing higher, than to follow with increased zeal in his steps. He longed only to pursue the labour which Elijah had begun pursue it with the same

steadfastness and the same resolute devotion.) So he asked for the portion of the firstborn, for recognition as his master's natural heir: "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."

God gives not as man gives, for His treasure knows no end, and is limited only by man's willingness to receive it. Elisha in all humility asked for the first-born's share in the heritage which his master had acquired—the heritage of the Spirit. God gave him more than He had given his master. For we can find the answer to Elisha's request in the contrast of the characters of the two men. Elijah towers in fiery grandeur, the very embodiment of the passion, the intensity, the volcanic energy of the Hebrew character. His form stands out in vast proportions against the stormy background of the wild times in which he lived. Notice how his example inspired the minds of the zealous Apostles: "Wilt thou that we call down fire from heaven and consume them, as Elijah did?" Note, too, the rebuke of Jesus, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." And even in his own day Elijah seems to have inspired awe and wonder rather than affection. He was a stern, reserved man, who scarcely seemed to feel as other men felt. Not only have we Ahab's startled cry, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" but even the widow of Zarephath, who had watched for months with wondering eye the prophet's sombre face, exclaimed as she clutched the corpse of her boy, "Hast thou come to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" So, too, Obadiah, though supported by a good conscience, still doubted this incomprehensible man. "As soon as I am gone from thee, the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me."



With Elisha it is quite different. His miracles show a deep sympathy with the small wants and misfortunes of daily life. He recovered from the river the luckless woodman's axe; he cured the barren spring; he did away with the ill effects of poisonous herbs gathered by mistake. No one was afraid of him; he inspired affection wherever he went. The Shunamite built a little chamber to welcome him when he passed that way, and Elisha's kindly heart prompted him to discover what return he could make for her goodwill. When her son dies he sends his servant, who can go more quickly than he can himself, to hasten beforehand with his staff and assure her of his coming. The sternness of Elijah is gone; his unrest, his discontent, his gloom have vanished. Elisha is more peaceful, more sympathetic, more human. He has all Elijah's strength, but more love. The "double portion of Elijah's spirit" was shown by the addition of tenderness and compassion to zeal and self-devotion. Elisha is a step nearer to Him who took man's nature upon Him, and bore his sorrows, who did not strive, nor cry, nor lift up His voice in the street, but moved quietly among the Galilean hills, and the publicans and sinners came unto Him.

But let us return to Elisha's answer to Elijah's departing offer of aid: "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." It was honourable alike to him who spoke it, and to him of whom it was spoken. It bore witness to the deep impression which Elijah's character had produced on his follower; it bore witness to the unselfishness, the submission, the teachableness of the disciple. It is a noble expression of the ideal relationship which ought to exist between young and old, between teacher and taught, between the waning and the rising generation. "I pray thee, let a

double portion of thy spirit be upon me.”—Could there be a finer statement of the true principle of progress? Could there be a more excellent motto for the guidance of human affairs? But how far off its application seems to be, how unrealized in the past! As we glance back we see a long process of destruction and reconstruction. We see how little one generation learned from the experience of the past; how little it cared that it should hand on a worthy tradition to those who were to come. We see restless antagonism to all that had been done; we see heedlessness about the permanence of the results that were being achieved. We see a forgetfulness that each generation is a link in the ages, and that its duty is to set a noble example, and so work that others may continue its labours.

To deal with the principle of historical progress would be a large matter. But the transmission of a spiritual heritage is a concern of our individual lives. The relationship of father to son, of young to old, of those who are passing away to those who are to take their place, is one which concerns us all. A relationship of some kind there must be; and the progress of mankind consists in the regulation of individual relationships. The next generation will consist of the children of this generation; and these children will largely owe their characters to their parents' example and their parents' precepts. It is a consoling thought that, though we may be helpless to heal the breaches of the present, we may help towards their healing in the future. Elijah might be conscious of his failures, but Elisha could carry on his work. There may be an Elijah and an Elisha in every home.

Is this the case? Do men work consciously for this result? Too frequently we find a wall of separation between

the old and the young. The young complain that the old are hard, unsympathetic, unreasonable, interfering, exacting. The old complain that the young are ungrateful, arrogant, disrespectful, conceited in ungrounded opinions. Too often the father complains that he does not understand his son: the son complains that he can find no sympathy from his father. A gulf once formed soon widens, and the natural link between generations is unnaturally severed. There is no more beautiful sight than to see young faces brighten when an old man enters the room; to hear young lips refer to his judgment in their perplexities; to feel that a strong bond of mutual sympathy and regard exists between them. There is no more saddening sight than to hear young voices hush before an old man's coming; to see animated faces grow resigned; to feel that the young heart closes as against a stranger, and that sympathy has no place. Much might be said in either case in excuse of one or the other. The elder may urge that his heart is full of tenderness towards the young, but he feels that their life lies outside the sphere of his own. Their interests are different from his; their ideas, however much he tries to understand them, are to him irritating. His patience sometimes fails him, and the mischief is gradually done, sorely against his will and in spite of his efforts. The young, on their side, say that though beset with perplexities and desirous of sympathy, they cannot find it; when they wish to pour out their hearts, they are checked on the threshold by hopeless misunderstanding; when they wish to be comforted, they are distracted by an officious or bustling kindness; when they wish to be consoled, they meet only with cold maxims which could never touch their palpitating heart. These are facts that lie within each one's experience, and make up much of

the perpetual tragedy of human life. They drive us to realize our helplessness. They disclose the deep gulf fixed between what we would do and what we can do.

I wish to make a few reflections on this subject. I will speak to the old rather than to the young. The duties of children to parents are perhaps sufficiently emphasized. We forget that the duties of parents to children must come first in the order of things. It was because the character of Elijah had attracted Elisha that he exclaimed, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." The old are masters of the situation. If the young break away from them the fault must be largely theirs.

1. It is useless to demand a respect, an affection, a regard from others which you are conscious in your heart of hearts that you do not deserve. Could you honestly wish that the young should say to you, "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me?" Would all parents be content that their own spirit should rule their children? Do they think their own life so lovely that they wish to see its animating spirit reproduced? Many—we see it on every side—will labour day and night to make money, to lay by riches and hand it on to those who are to come after them. They toil with such haste that they have little leisure to wash their hands in innocency. They apply to their dealings with their fellow-men principles which they would think most unnatural if applied by their children to themselves. They lead lives of drudgery that are forgetful of noble things. They delude themselves into thinking that it is all being done for the good of their children. They excuse an act of dubious honesty by the plea that their children will be saved the necessity of performing one like it. Can such a man hope to gain the affection, the respect of his children?

What, will he leave them lands and money, and think that this is all? Will he forget the richer legacy of a stainless name, a high character, a noble life? Bring up a child in a simple way, with few desires, and a hatred of unrealities, and you have given him that contentment which is great riches. Look that your child be soundly educated, be brought up amid surroundings which, however humble, are refined. Take care that he sees his parents loving one another with honest, constant love. Let him spend his young days in an atmosphere of quiet affection and openness, which is the truest safeguard against all unlovely thoughts and desires. Consider that grace and courtesy, kindness, simplicity, and straightforwardness are duties towards which the presence of your child ought to give you a redoubled stimulus. Do this, and you have given him a rich store of spiritual wealth of which nothing can deprive him.

2. Again, the pressure of daily occupations is often a cause why a parent sees little of his children. He is absorbed in his own pursuits; he is away from home during the day; when he comes back at night he is weary. He intends to see more of his children later on in life, when they are older and can understand him more easily. Meanwhile, they grow up strangers to him; and the chances are that in the future he will find it difficult to establish satisfactory relations on his own terms. However busy a man is, he may spare a few minutes regularly for his children. He ought to keep himself acquainted with their development, and ought by a few words every day to establish his hold upon their affections. If a man comes home wearied, he will find his best relaxation in a little unbending with his children. If his coming be a check to their innocent playfulness, a

barrier is erected in early days between themselves and him. Some men, again, renowned for social gifts away from home, are silent and reserved in their own families. This ought not to be so. The truest social gifts spring from ready geniality and quick sympathy. A man's character ought to show itself most fully in his own home; his social gifts ought first to brighten his immediate circle; his knowledge, his interests, his pleasantness ought to be most clearly seen in the ordinary conduct of his daily life. Anything done in other spheres ought to be the natural extension of qualities which are most constantly exercised at home. Nothing can excuse a neglect or scant performance of domestic duties. St. Paul expresses the Christian view of home life when he says, "A bishop must be one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity."

3. I have been speaking hitherto to parents; but the duty which I am enforcing is one of universal application. All of us are in our respective stations influencing the character of the next generation. We are doing so unconsciously, whether we will or no. We are either giving or withholding the results of our experience of life. We are either striving by ready sympathy to smooth the path of others, or we are making their path more difficult by our indifference. There is nothing which more entirely brings its own recompense than sympathy with the young. Old age comes upon most men, and brings its burdens. Happy is the man who has so arranged his life that the burden falls lightly upon him. He who has formed his interests in early days, and has not extended them as years went by, finds himself isolated in old age. He is no longer capable of continuing his occupations; his friends



have one by one fallen away ; he is perforce dependent upon others, and their relationship towards him is one founded upon duty, not upon affection. An old man may not be really selfish, but he may none the less feel bitterly that he is a burden to those around him. He cannot share their interests, he cannot enter into their lives, he cannot understand their ideas. When increasing infirmities force him into their society, he feels that he is out of place. It is too late then to repair the mischief ; the process of growth in sympathy must be continuous, it cannot be taken up at will. It is not too much to say that old age divides men sharply into two strongly contrasted classes. Amongst some we find isolation and querulousness ; amongst others we find geniality and contentment. We see either a painful spectacle of the natural decay of one whose spiritual life has long been ended, or we see the vigorous strength of "the last of life for which the first was made." We scarcely recognize as one of the problems of life how to grow old happily. But, believe me, that it is one which a clergyman's experience brings forcibly before him. If you would solve this problem satisfactorily, resolve in early life that you will recognize your duty towards those who are coming after you, that you will lose no opportunity of extending ready sympathy to those younger than yourself. Strive so to walk that the last wish of others towards you may be, "I pray that 'a double portion of thy spirit may be upon me.'"

Let me give a few practical hints towards the regulation of this relationship between young and old.

1. Beware of beginning to treat a young man with a sympathy which you are not prepared to carry beyond a limited point. The boy just changing into manhood is willing enough to treat his elder with the respect due to his



greater age, his longer experience, his more assured position. If he is encouraged to talk freely he will open his heart, and will pour out his real thoughts. They may be crude, rash, enthusiastic, impracticable ; they may have been many times disproved, but they are the genuine expression of his existing state of development. For a while the older is content to argue, to discuss the question ; presently he is wearied by the boy's pertinacity, and ends by exclaiming testily, " I am older than you, and wiser. I tell you all this is wrong. You should not be so arrogant." This is surely unwise. The boy feels that he has been unjustly treated. The talk began as of one human being with another. His arguments were refuted so long as refutation was easy ; when it became more difficult, the matter was settled by a sudden appeal to authority. In dealing with the young try and recognize all the good that is in them. Do not be intolerant of enthusiasms, which once appealed to yourself, and which you reluctantly abandoned. Be willing to think that what you were not strong enough to do another may accomplish. Remember that you cannot really influence another unless you are ready to deal with him as an equal.

2. Beware of demanding gratitude from the young. It is selfish to expect gratitude ; it is useless to demand it. Take it thankfully when it is proffered. The young are always ungrateful, and they are so in virtue of their inexperience. They do not know, and so they cannot appreciate, the innumerable acts of self-denial and of self-sacrifice of which they have been the objects from their earliest days. Do for them what you do with a genuine desire for their good, and let the sincerity of your own efforts be its own reward. Let the motive of your action be the sense of the duty that you owe to the future of your race.

3. I pass to another caution. Do not aim at making the young mere copies of yourself, repeating the same opinions, having the same interests, setting before themselves the same practical aims. Years are rolling on, and opinions are changing. The world is not the same as it was in the old man's younger days. Its problems are in many ways different. New difficulties require new armour, new dangers require new precautions. However much the elder may live in the world and note its changes, still it cannot look the same to him as to the young man whose eyes are fixed upon a further future, who is full of shadowy thoughts and dim aspirations which he can scarcely express, but which are to him the most real part of his life and character. Do not try to alter the development of a young heart; try only to direct it. Remove difficulties, ward off dangers, give strength by the knowledge that you are always ready to aid. The pessimism of old age is proverbial. "Things are not as they used to be when I was young," says the old man; but he has not proved that they are worse. Let him set himself to understand these differences. Let him remember that his duty is to increase the good, and combat the evil, which is in the world. Let him direct his experienced wisdom towards discerning more clearly between good and evil, not only in their outward appearance, but in their deeper causes. Let him hope and pray that those who are to come after him may be better and wiser than he has been himself. Saul, overweighed with the sense of his own failure, gazed with mixed feelings on the fair-faced shepherd-lad who had an enthusiastic belief in "the living God." When that belief led to successful heroism, Saul's feelings determined to dislike and hatred. Let us see that we leave no room within our hearts for the

evil spirit which vexed Saul. Let us see that we are not possessed by an exclusive wish that nothing be done save in our own way. Let us pray that a double portion of our spirit may be upon those who are to come.

These suggestions which I have put before you do not concern merely trivial points, do not only affect the fringe of our life. They are, I think, concerned with the very essence of our spiritual being. They are the direct result of the Christian view of the world. There is no more noticeable triumph of the Gospel than its restoration of the family, its influence upon the most intimate relationships of life. Few warnings of our Lord and Master are more solemn than that contained in the words, "Whosoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe on Me to stumble, it were better for him if a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." Christ's denunciation against those who cast stumbling-blocks in the way of His little ones should warn us to beware lest haply we be found to do so. And care cannot be merely a negative virtue. We cannot only ask, "Who is my neighbour?" We must discover to whom we can act as neighbour. We must not only strive to avoid casting stumbling-blocks; we must labour that we remove them. No labour is more richly rewarded here in this world. No pleasure is comparable to that which comes from enlarged sympathies, from widening interests, from ready kindliness. No subject so much repays our study as the development of the young mind. We see in it the germs of the future, and the sight strengthens us to look more trustfully, more hopefully on the present. Think of the beauty of the last thanksgiving of Jesus: "Of those whom Thou gavest Me have I lost none."

"Those whom Thou gavest Me." Yes, God commits

others to our charge. He gives them to us as His richest treasures, and we may make them our treasures also. Let us accept the gift for the Giver's sake, and study to realize its greatness. Let us set ourselves to illumine by our example the path of those who are to come ; to aid them by our precepts ; to strengthen them by our love. No duty can make a stronger claim on any man than that of recognizing his position as a link among the ages, of striving that he may hand on to a sturdier runner in the race of life the torch which he himself has so far borne with unequal steps. It depends upon ourselves that our lives should be fruitful in the future, that our words should awaken an echo when our lips are cold, that the recollection of our smile should bring comfort and strength when our face has long been compounded with the clay, that many a young heart should pour forth the prayer that a double portion of our spirit may be upon it.

# SYMPATHY.



## SYMPATHY.

*(Preached before the University of Oxford.)*

“The brethren, when they heard of us, came to meet us . . . whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.”—ACTS xxviii. 15.

WE might suppose that the Apostle St. Paul had been sufficiently comforted and supported in his journey to Rome. He had seen manifold signs of the protection of Divine Providence. Amid the terrors of a shipwreck he alone had not lost his confidence. When his comrades were distracted by fear, his courage enabled him to retain a sound judgment. He stood forth the one man of practical sagacity among the trembling crowd of those whose previous experience was of no further avail. He gave the obvious advice that the flight of the crew in the ship's boats would be ruinous to the preservation of those who were left deserted by experienced seamen. He proffered the indisputable counsel, “This day is the fourteenth that ye wait and continue fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I beseech you to take some food : for this is for your safety.” Very plain, all this, very obvious, very simple. But it is always so. Practical wisdom consists in saying the obvious thing at the right time. True courage consists in doing the obvious thing in an emergency. But many things are obvious in quiet moments which are



forgotten in times of excitement ; the course of duty which is so plainly seen in the stillness of reflection, is undiscoverable when the crisis comes. The discipline of our lives is not meant to make us exceptionally brilliant or original or ingenious ; it has done its work if it enables us to do the most commonplace duties in the spirit of the most ordinary common sense, at times when the burden of responsibility falls upon us. Our training has, indeed, been excellent if it saves us from the confusion that arises from mixed motives, from imperfect understanding, from want of integrity of purpose.

Such a discipline of mind and character St. Paul had enjoyed ; and therefore he stood forth, <sup>he was</sup> steadfast in purpose and calm in temper, the undoubted hero of a dangerous time. When others were in despair, he was unmoved ; when others were perplexed, he had a perfectly clear purpose to pursue. He saved his companions, and received the homage of their gratitude and admiration. Danger brought to St. Paul, as it does to every true man, a new revelation of himself, his character, his work in the world ; it brought out his genuine qualities, his dependence on God, his consciousness of a Divine mission—a mission not to be exercised only in some chosen field of appointed usefulness, but bringing with it plain and homely duties to be discharged in unexpected places ; a mission not only as a teacher and a preacher, but as a leader of men whenever a leader was required ; a mission not limited to things in which he had experience, but resting on principles which were capable of indefinite application ; a mission founded on a pervading sense of the power and goodness of God. “ I am become wiser than my teachers, because I have kept Thy law.” St. Paul's shipwreck was in every way a sign and token of God's presence

with him, within as well as without. It taught him how entire was the sufficiency that is of God.

Moreover, the testimony of God to St. Paul's mission became still more manifest after the shipwreck, and showed itself in exceptional ways. His preservation from the viper's sting impressed the wild islanders with a belief of his divinity; his gift of healing was exercised so that their gratitude and help were enlisted on behalf of the shipwrecked crew. Again Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, was the man who took the command and stood out foremost, so that the promise was fully verified: "Lo, God hath granted thee all them that sail with thee." We might say that St. Paul's journey to Italy was the greatest triumph in his life. His foresight had been abundantly justified; none of his words had fallen to the ground; his power as a leader of men had been wonderfully shown; he had dominated all around him, soldiers, sailors, rude countryfolk and cultivated colonists alike. Everywhere he had been successful; over every one he had been supreme. A splendid promise had been given him for the new task that lay before him. He might approach the great city of Rome with the feelings of an assured conqueror.

So we might think; but it would seem that St. Paul thought otherwise. He knew full well that his life's work did not admit of any great dramatic crisis. He was not led away by the intoxication of feeling that he was the hero of the hour. He did not reckon on the permanence of human gratitude. Perhaps he knew that when the shipwrecked mariners returned home and told their tale, each one would begin and end his story with the account of his own prowess; and the point which would stand prominently forward in his narrative would be the credit due to himself for the clever

way in which he managed to escape from the foundering ship. Perhaps he was not much moved by the bewildered and unintelligent admiration of the islanders, nor by the honours and rewards offered by those whom he had healed. All this did not in itself further his great object. We do not know that any Church was founded in Melita ; we do not know that any of the companions of his voyage were moved to turn to the Lord Jesus, and see behind St. Paul One mightier than he. Doubtless St. Paul was braced and strengthened by all that befell him on the way ; doubtless he saw that the good hand of his God was with him, and felt encouraged ; doubtless he rejoiced in these renewed credentials to his mission. But smaller things than these were needed to cheer the human heart even of an Apostle, and they in good time were vouchsafed him ; for the brethren in Rome, “ when they heard of us, came to meet us as far as The Market of Appius and The Three Taverns : whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.” Not the knowledge that the winds and waves were ordered for his sake ; not the exhibition of the power of his personality over others ; not the consciousness of special gifts bestowed upon him ; not the effusive gratitude of those whom he benefited ; but the feeling that he had friends like-minded with himself, friends who understood him and loved him for his works’ sake before they had seen his face—this it was that comforted him, so that “ he thanked God, and took courage.”

We have here an illustration of a great principle of the Divine economy. The supernatural, the extraordinary may awaken, arouse, direct, and fix the attention ; but it is the natural and the ordinary which cheers the heart and guides the conduct. St. Paul’s sense of the overruling providence of God marked out for him the work that was to be done,

~~the course that was to be pursued ;~~ but the sympathy of men like himself, and the sense of human companionship were necessary to endow him with perfect courage, and aroused a more heartfelt gratitude to God than did even the wondrous preservation of his life from danger. What St. Paul had experienced at sea was merely the assurance that his bodily life was safe, that his labours were still to be continued ; what he experienced when the greetings of the Christian brotherhood fell upon his ear was the assurance that God had provided a further sphere for his labours, and that they had not hitherto been in vain in the Lord. The shipwreck told him that the present, however stormy it might seem, was still his ; the greetings of the little Christian band foretold that the future also was his.)

St. Paul recognized at once this truth, which had to be taught to the great prophet of <sup>the</sup> Old Dispensation. When Elijah was ~~overborne by disappointment~~, he sent up the despairing cry, " I, even I only, am left ; and they seek my life, to take it away." He despaired because his trust was on the constant supernatural assistance of Jehovah. He stood proudly and resolutely on the Mount of Carmel, when no voice was lifted in his favour, because he was quite content to know that the Lord was with him. But ~~he could not endure that the light of that Presence should be obscured for a moment ; and when the manifestation of Divine power did not lead to immediate success, he was helpless.~~ In his case the Divine discipline was given to lead him outside a life of forced isolation, and bid him find in human companionship alike the sphere and the means of working for God. " Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed unto Baal." Let him go and seek out the scattered members of this faithful

band. Let him not fix his thoughts entirely on the present, but let him take courage in the thoughts of future triumphs, which were his, though they were won by other hands—nay, neither his nor theirs, because they were only the Lord's. He despaired because he did not seek companionship and sympathy; he was bidden to find in these the ordinary working of the Divine power, the constant revelation of the Divine purposes to the believing and attentive soul.

In ordinary language this virtue of sympathy, like many other virtues, has received a conventional meaning, and so has been degraded. It is often limited to great crises of individual lives. I do not so much quarrel with this limitation if the frequency of crises was more readily recognized. But sympathy is generally looked for and given on the occurrence of some loss, some disaster, which is open and obvious. Men forget the twofold bearing of the Apostle's exhortation to "Rejoice with them that do rejoice," as well as to "weep with them that weep." Great as may be the solace of sympathy in the times of crushing misfortune, it acts then but as an alleviation of inevitable pain. In the more subtle crises of our apparently uneventful everyday life it is a controlling and directing influence, powerful above all others for the formation of character. I would speak of it, not in its exceptional manifestations, but as a virtue to be exercised, and a benefit to be conferred, in the common intercourse of daily life.

But first let me notice that there are manifest dangers in the way of an attempt to acquire or exercise sympathy. The evils of its defect are obvious; the evils of its excess are not so apparent. Yet every one will recognize that sympathy is useless unless it is entirely genuine. We cannot frame ourselves to be sympathetic at a moment's notice,

because we cannot possibly express what we do not feel. An affected sympathy becomes the merest sentimentalism. It is useless to try and say what we think another expects us to say. Such utterances are valueless even in matters of opinion, when only our intellectual qualities are called into play; they are worse than valueless when our moral nature, whose strength is its absolute sincerity, is involved. Sympathy must, above all things, be spontaneous and genuine. It will not bear unlimited demands. I remember a wise piece of advice, "Never pay more than one visit of condolence in the day. If you are in earnest, the strain upon your feelings will be so great that you will not be equal to a second effort." Perhaps many of you have suffered from ill-judging attempts at sympathy, and have winced in mute agony under the torture inflicted by well-meaning persons who assumed that they understood you, without trying to do so, and whose precious balms went nigh to break your head. Besides being genuine, sympathy must also be intelligent; and it is well to be modest about our intelligence, however convinced we may be of our good intentions. Sympathy is not an accomplishment, it is a grace; and, if sought for, must be sought for as a grace, not practised as a profession.

If excessive display of sympathy is to be guarded against for the sake of him who gives, it is equally to be avoided for the sake of him who receives. There is a class of moral invalids who clamour for sympathy, just as hypochondriacs try to cure their imaginary ailments by relays of quack medicines. We have to learn, sometimes by painful experience, that our well-meant efforts to heal are only feeding a moral malady. Some characters suffer from a habit of morbid introspection; they are never tired of



relating their symptoms, but they have not the courage, the sincerity, the self-denial to take the steps necessary for their cure. They are willing to pose endlessly as interesting cases, and they need some one in whom they can confide—not that his advice may help and strengthen them, but that they may develop their conviction of their own exceptional condition by gaining the certainty which comes from repeated expression of what was at first merely a conjecture. This disease arises from an overweening self-absorption. Those who suffer from it, instead of adapting themselves to the problems of life, sit with folded hands waiting till life should adapt itself to their own exceptional requirements. They are convinced that any shred of a difficulty which has occurred to their listless minds has in itself an inherent preciousness. They are satisfied that they are not as other men are, that their finer organization and more sensitive perceptions have given them an insight into things of which those cast in the ordinary mould are incapable. They nourish themselves on idle talk and vain declamation, because thereby they gain a sense of doing something, whereas they are doing nothing. They are clamorous for sympathy, because it deadens the voice of conscience, which sometimes urges distrust in their own wisdom. They do not care that the sympathy should be intelligent, or should be helpful; it is enough for them that it should seem to exist, for its mere exhibition suffices to lull their indolent restlessness.

I have dwelt upon this malady, for it is one not uncommon amongst young men. A character for originality is cheaply won; but, I suppose, the wiser a man is the less he cares to lay claim to originality. He knows that true wisdom lies not in the invention of new phrases,



which have nothing new in their contents, but in the possession of a judgment trained by a careful observation of manifold details. No one has a right to express a new idea on a subject till he has carefully examined all the old ones ; and, perhaps, before he has done so his belief in his own *à priori* conception will have been strangely modified. The affectation of originality amongst young men is generally combined with idleness. Perhaps many of you know the young man who can always utter startling opinions on almost any subject, but who refrains from submitting the results of his genius to any ordinary test. He is pronounced to be very clever, a man who might do anything he liked if he only chose, but he only chooses to idle and to talk ; he darkly hints that he has a soul which is superior to the grovelling means whereby ordinary mortals acquire knowledge ; he gathers round him a band of admirers to whom he complains of the hard measure which he receives from a cold and unfeeling world ; he aspires to the solace due to the lonely position of one who is habitually misunderstood.

Beware of aiding such a one in his self-chosen career of uselessness by unwise sympathy. Remember that the law of life is effort, that talk is valueless unless it leads to action, that the truth of opinions is to be tested by their practical efficacy. Tell one who complains that he is misunderstood that it is his business to explain himself, and that he will not learn to do this by unhealthy brooding. Tell one whose originality prevents him from doing the common work of life, that opinions which are new have all the greater need of proving themselves to be true, and that one who elects to put on the prophet's mantle must be prepared for the labours and hardships of a prophet's life.

Do not let the impulses of your own sympathetic nature, or your complaisance to the imperious cravings of another, lead you to forget your own principles, or make you shut your eyes to common sense. You must not be sympathetic at the expense of truth.

The consideration of these limitations leads to the conclusion that sympathy is not a quality which can be pursued by itself. Fellow-feeling is an emotion which owes its direction and its guidance to the principles which it expresses. What are those principles? I cannot answer better than by following the analysis of St. Peter, "Be ye all like-minded, sympathetic," *γίεσθε ὁμόφρονες, συμπαθεῖς*. Unanimity, like-mindedness must come first; and of this sympathy is the expression. We must first be like-minded; not, observe, of the same mind, still less of the same opinion. The Apostle does not bid us to aim at bringing all men to our mind; he bids us recognize likemindedness as actually existing between ourselves and all with whom we have to do. Is he not justified in so bidding? Does not the sense of the common Fatherhood of God, the common Brotherhood of Christ, unite men by a bond which nothing else can forge? Is not the same God over all? Did not Christ die for all? Is not the end and aim of life the same for all men? Assuredly we are members one of another in a deeper sense than we can fathom; and the acknowledgment of this truth must be the beginning of the Christian practice. Nothing to him is common or unclean, for God has cleansed all things, and Christ's love has knit all men together.

Like-mindedness is the recognition of this truth. I say its recognition, for it is a truth readily professed. But the training of the Christian character consists in turning

into principles of action, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, intellectual convictions which in themselves may be barren of result. The first step in this process must be the clear recognition of their universal application, that so the heart, inspired by the love of God, may feel its emotions quickened and directed towards actions in accordance with the Divine wisdom. A hazy or incomplete apprehension of the bearings of Christian truth must be a bar to spiritual progress. First comes the knowledge of the truth, then the recognition of its meaning to ourselves, then the submission of the heart to God, and the request by prayer that we may be built up and strengthened to an ever-increasing power of exhibiting in our lives the truth which we profess. Like-mindedness is the recognition of the truth of the brotherhood of man in Christ; sympathy is the expression of this truth in our daily conduct.

Now, it is sometimes objected to the Christian view of life that it is selfish, because it teaches every man to care for his individual salvation; that it is in some ways a bar to social progress, because it lays down that this life is not the ultimate goal of human effort, but is merely a state of preparation for another and a better world; that its exhortations to the virtues of contentment and resignation are hindrances to the inevitable struggle after social reorganization. It is asserted that other systems of life are really more beneficial to the obvious and palpable interests of mankind.

Is this so? Surely Christianity tells us that we are a band of brethren bound together on a common quest, bent on a journey to a far-off land, each needing help, and each rendering it in turn. It bids us think of our common life as that of a band of emigrants, all expecting great prosperity

on another shore—a mixed company, it is true, with different aptitudes and different objects, but recognizing the paramount need of union and mutual help on the way. So the wise will calm the groundless fears of the ignorant; the strong will support the tottering limbs of the weak; each in his degree will have his share of work to do in overcoming the difficulties of the enterprise, and rendering the common journey easier to all. And, observe, the object of the journey is to reach a new land abounding with blessings for all, and it is the knowledge of this fact that most effectually keeps the band together. If the good things to be obtained were limited, the strongest would push on first, that they might take exclusive possession; if the good things were to be won by wisdom, the wise would keep their knowledge to themselves. The position of those who sneer at Christianity as a hindrance to human progress rests on the assumption that they can satisfactorily limit and define the objects of human effort. If they succeeded, life would indeed degenerate into a scramble, in which the weakest would go to the wall. The process of natural selection is merciless, and cannot be contemplated without a shudder; but Christian love points out a more excellent way, and opens the prospect, here in this life, of the beginning of a spiritual, not a natural, order. The manifoldness of human nature is a proof of the Divine origin of man. His aspirations cannot be confined within the limits of any formula of man's invention. If human nature were but a little different from what it is, or could be altered to suit the convenience of a definition, there would be room for much ingenious speculation; but so long as human nature is what it is, the Gospel of Christ alone points to the way of happiness. Difficulties there are, but they fade away

before the constant practice of Christian faith, Christian hope, and Christian charity.

I claim, then, that Christianity promotes social progress in the most effective way, because it has no definite system of the outward organization of human society, but acts upon the wills of men by urging those great principles which are the true bonds between man and man. It is not concerned with the form, but with the spirit. It pleads that, if men would realize their true position in this world, all questions of outward organization would settle themselves. And surely we may see the wisdom of that if we look around us. The tendency of this our age is strongly towards philanthropy, towards grappling with the problems of our common life. I think that an observer would conclude that these efforts were effective in proportion as they embodied the Christian spirit. Many movements, excellent in themselves, clearly fail to influence those for whom they are designed, because they do not rest on like-mindedness, because they are not set forth in terms of sympathy. Men are not moved to rise to a higher life by considerations of the diminution of rates, of the increase of industry, of economic advantages. Such arguments may influence the zeal of the philanthropist, but they do not supply him with the means of influencing others. He must speak, if he is to carry conviction, as an equal to equals; he must make his hearers feel that he is seeking their highest good, which is also his own; he must appeal to their inherent dignity as men, and must show them the unknown and unexpected capacities which are hidden in every human heart. His power and his usefulness will depend on his exercise of genuine sympathy.

(This truth is illustrated in a most remarkable way by the life of St. Francis of Assisi, a simple man who had no great

purpose in his acts, but only lived a life in accordance with the truth which he knew ; and yet he wrought the greatest social regeneration which has been seen since Christianity first dawned upon the world. It is true that he was a poet whose poetry expressed itself not in verse but in a character ; it is true that he lived in a state of exaltation beyond the reasoning powers of most men even to understand. But his life was one continued exhibition of sympathy, blessing alike him who gave and him who took. He saw Christ on earth in man and beast and flower ; he hailed even the fire as his brother and the moon as his sister. He restored on this earth the innocence of paradise. His belief was to him a source of supreme pleasure ; he was always happy, joyous, light-hearted, the cause of happiness wherever he went. He was so satisfied with the inward treasures of his heart that he preferred to wander without money or possessions, so that he might be free from care. He knew, not so much the doctrine, as the Person, of Christ, and spoke only of Christ's love. He opposed no man, he contradicted nothing, he denounced nothing ; he framed no system, he did not wish to found an order, he had no interest in being imitated, he merely wished to live his life as he conceived it. Yet that life of his composed differences, dispelled errors, breathed a new spirit into the world, proclaimed the aristocratic dignity of poverty, created art, revived literature, awakened learning, remade the future of society. As we read the simple story of his life and meditate on its immense results, we feel that men respond to the voice of Christian sympathy more readily than to the ideal of human aspiration which seems to be most popular amongst philanthropists at present—the ideal that every man should have an arm-chair of his own, and leisure to use it.



Let me come back to the considerations with which I began. The boast of our Universities is that they furnish a supply of persons qualified to serve God in Church and State. For either of these spheres a cardinal virtue in this our day is the grace of sympathy. I call it a grace because it can neither be directly taught, nor can it safely be practised or acquired by itself. It is the flower of a large view of life and its relationships—a view which is large, ~~not because it pretends to rise above the morality of Christ,~~ but because it is founded on the revelation of those bonds between man and man which only become clear in the light of the life of Jesus. It is not hard to be interested in your fellow-men, if you regard them as so much material on which you may try your 'prentice hand in the way of social organization. It is easy enough to regard your fellow-men as so much undeveloped force, by supplying whom with a definite motive you may work out your own political ideas. It is pleasurable to approach your fellow-men with a benevolent patronage, and gently flatter your sense of your own superior wisdom by an amiable condescension to their level. It is not so easy to live amongst them as your equals; to confess that their lives, though different to yours in outward seeming, are in their essence the same; to rejoice in their companionship, as did S. Francis; to look upon the world, as does the Father of all things, with long-suffering, with compassion, with love. Yet sympathy, true sympathy, can only be the result of such a view; only if the conception of the world as God's world be foremost in your mind can sympathy well up spontaneously in your acts, your words, your looks. Then it will come of itself—the accompaniment of your daily walk—giving to all you do a power beyond what you can guess; speaking oftentimes in silence,



bearing fruit in unexpected places ; kindling resolve in unknown hearts, and bracing to effort souls still unconscious of their powers.

Would you know if you have begun to gain this grace — if your character, with all its imperfections, is still founded upon the true foundation? Look for a moment at your actual relations to those immediately around you. Are you happy in your surroundings? Are you contented? Do you take pleasure in your intercourse with your equals? Or are you annoyed at their little faults? Does their perversity irritate you? Are you impatient of contradiction? Are you desirous of immediate and definite success? Many men seek in the discharge of public duties a satisfaction which they cannot find in private life. It is much easier to awaken the cheers in an excited audience than to call up a smile of gratification on a well-known face. It is much easier to deal with men in masses than as individuals ; but I think you will admit the practical wisdom of St. Paul's question : " If a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God ? "

I would apply these thoughts especially to younger men. It is a cause of deep thankfulness that there has arisen amongst the youth of this generation a deep and genuine interest in the great social questions of the day — that they are discussed, and that action is often taken in consequence of their discussion. But do these discussions immediately affect your daily life? Or are your duties to society something that you are one day going to work out, when opportunity offers, but which have no concern with existing relationships? In short, do you recognize sympathy as a grace, or are you only going to practise it as a profession? Ask yourself if your sense

of public duty makes you more amiable to your brothers and sisters in your own home. If not, it is worth while considering how much reality there is in high-sounding professions with reference to abstract intentions. Moreover, do these good intentions towards mankind in general lead you to any greater consideration for men in particular? In any society there is ample rule for the practise of the virtue of sympathy. Popularity is strangely capricious, and public opinion is often very unforgiving. Some slight personal peculiarity, a few inconsiderate sayings at first, differences of manner or speech arising from a different training to that which the majority have undergone—hundreds of trifling things are enough to make a man a social butt or a social outcast. Qualities which are conventionally attractive rank high in young men's estimation; more sterling virtues are often unrecognized. Yet I think it might well be a worthy object for the endeavour of each of you, not only that you should desire to help mankind, but that you should try and help some definite individuals who have been less favoured than yourselves. Remember that if you project great things, there is also an opportunity to begin by performing small things.

(The great Apostle ~~St. Paul~~ thanked God and took courage when he was cheered by the sense of companionship in his aims, his aspirations, and his life. We all need the same consolation and sustainment *handwritten* in rendering it one to another we are fulfilling one of the highest duties to which God has called us.) May He grant us all that knowledge of the world as His world, which will give us at once a teachable and a generous heart. May He so direct you that your converse one with another may be of high and holy things; that all good hopes and all noble aspirations may be

awakened in you ; that in the turmoil of life in the years that are to come you may feel that your characters were established, strengthened, settled by generous sentiments, awakened by personal intercourse ; that in your hours of trial you may look back upon pure memories of ennobling effort in your youthful days, and on the retrospect may thank God and take courage.

THE DESIRE FOR SATIS-  
FACTION.



## THE DESIRE FOR SATIS- FACTION.

*(Preached before the University of Oxford.)*

“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other : for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”—LUKE xviii. 14.

PERHAPS the character of the Pharisee in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican is one that, as a rule, has scanty justice done to it. Like all human characters, it was composed of mixed elements ; and as we listen to the story in which it is portrayed our sympathies are so entirely caught by the beauty and dignity of a simple and confiding nature, that we dismiss with slight recognition a complicated character, in which the roots of good and evil lie close by one another. In some measure this arises from the words in which St. Luke introduces the parable : “He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.” Yet, though this introduction marks the conditions under which our Lord spoke, it does not limit the reference of his utterance to these conditions only. In fact, such a limitation would be contrary to the method of our Lord’s teaching ; for He always passed beyond the immediate circumstances to

a statement of general principles, and His reproofs were administered, not so much by direct condemnation, as by holding up an example of a more excellent way. The Pharisee in the parable was more than a mere symbol of self-righteousness and contempt for others.

Nor, on the other hand, are we to make the Publican the chief character in the parable; for this entirely destroys the reference with which St. Luke introduces it, and the remark which our Lord adds at its close. The Publican exists only as the necessary foil to bring into relief the character and motive of the Pharisee. Moreover, if this be admitted, we must further beware of estimating the Publican at the Pharisee's valuation of him. The Pharisee, presumably, knew nothing about him, save the nature of his occupation; and he noticed the lowliness of his attitude in prayer. He inferred in the Publican the consciousness of great transgressions against the moral law; he regarded him, probably, as a sinner newly awakened to a sense of righteousness. If we take his inference for a fact, his judgment for the truth, we mistake both characters, and lose the full meaning of the parable, which thus becomes another of the series which speak of the preciousness of repentance, and is deprived of its own distinctive teaching.

I think it best to take the parable as it stands, without any prepossessions respecting either of the characters whom it puts before us. Both go up to the temple to pray; both of them were religious men, engaged, each after his own manner, in his religious duties. Both of them were accepted before God, and both of them received a blessing on their service; but the blessing vouchsafed to the one was greater than that given to the other: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the



other." The object of the parable is to put before us two conceptions of the religious life, two motives of divine service, two ideals of the relations of the human soul to God.

Taking, then, this view, let us consider the points in which those notions are contrasted. It is not that either of the men is less honest in his intention of drawing near to God. Nor does the fact that the Pharisee speaks of his works, while the Publican does not, prove that the Publican was a whit less punctilious than the Pharisee in discharging all the formal obligations of the Law. The one thing that is clear is that the Pharisee was satisfied with himself, and that his spiritual condition was, in his eyes, a subject of rejoicing and self-congratulation; while the Publican was profoundly dissatisfied with himself, and could only look upon his spiritual condition with shame and regret. If we look at the parable with open minds, it draws a contrast between self-satisfaction and self-dissatisfaction in the spiritual life, and teaches that dissatisfaction is the more excellent way.

This is not a result of the religious life which at once approves itself to the natural intelligence; and religious history tells us of many devices to escape from this admission. There is an inevitable desire amongst men for self-satisfaction, and they desire a system of life which promises them this source of gratification. The longing to be able to say with a good conscience, "I have done all that was my duty to do," has led to many attempts to define and regulate the sphere of duty. The history of the Medieval Church is one continuous record of efforts to find a course of life which should be free from outward difficulties, and should admit of undisturbed devotion to God's service. Each attempt was for a time successful in raising a new

standard of religious zeal, but in each instance the spirit died away before familiarity, and the external activities alone were left. The movement of the sixteenth century aimed at freeing man from what was outward, and bringing him back to what was inward. He had wandered into roads whose neat and trim appearance attracted him to pursue them, and hid from his eyes the fact that they only led him round and round in a course where there was no real progress. He was bidden to recognize that there was no satisfaction to be found in the works of the ecclesiastical system, in the technicalities of endless regulations, where every deed had an exact value, and every sin needed an exact measure of penance. Man was invited to enter upon a larger field and breathe the purer air of Christian liberty founded upon faith, and faith only. But the new system commended itself by its superior claim to give self-satisfaction. It offered peace of mind, not as the result of laborious effort and strict discipline, but as an individual intuition, a gift by itself, dependent on rightness of intellectual conception and clearness of spiritual vision. So far as this object was pursued, the new system became after a little time as formal as the old; it attached equal importance to trifles, and demanded an equal submission to rules and regulations. In fact, so long as man requires the sense of self-satisfaction, he can only obtain it through obedience to rules. It is difficult to have at once the consciousness of freedom and of complete satisfaction with the results of the use of that freedom. Looked at from a moral point of view, mankind is certainly not so much enamoured of freedom as he would have us believe. Man is generally ready to part with his freedom if he can obtain in exchange a feeling of self-satisfaction.

I said that the claim to feel satisfied with ourselves was natural, so natural that it has influenced the development of Christianity in the same way, though not to the same degree, as it influenced the development of Judaism. Our Lord deals with it in this parable tenderly but justly. The Pharisee's prayer was not rejected; he was only less justified than the other. He is not even severely blamed by Jesus, who contents Himself with showing the danger which besets self-satisfaction. It is barren of promise for the future, it leads to disappointment, and may provoke a fall. "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased."

Doubtless, the Pharisee would have said "Amen" to that proverb; he would not for a moment have admitted that his own satisfaction in his punctilious discharge of his religious and social duties was other than a legitimate feeling, or that it amounted to self-exaltation. Yet he set up himself as a standard by which he judged others, and he condemned them for not reaching his own spiritual attainments. Is not this most natural? Do we not recognize the same feeling in ourselves? Is it not intolerable to us to see another breaking the rules which we have deliberately formed for our own discipline? Do we not instinctively draw ourselves up, and prepare to treat with cold politeness, one who is the more irritating because he worships with us, and yet does not take the same view as ourselves of the relative proportions of those duties in which our common life is spent? In short, do not religious dissensions mainly arise from the desire for self-satisfaction by reference to some outward standard of faith or practice? Do they not largely spring from an unconscious wish to exalt ourselves at the expense of others?

This is the first evil result which follows from the pursuit

of self-satisfaction in the spiritual life. It cuts a man off from half of the lessons whereby God would train his soul in holiness. It cuts him off from that large sympathy with all men, which is the special mark of our great Master's life on earth. The man who deliberately makes a division in his own mind between himself and those who hold with him on the one side, and all other men on the other side, is certainly making his own life poorer, and is losing precious opportunities. "The extortioner, the unjust, the adulterer"—these were abstractions; but when the Pharisee's eye fell upon one who followed a trade which was not quite respectable, and which was certainly beset with temptations, he could not help seeing in him an expression of all that was most offensive to his moral susceptibilities—"or even as this Publican," he added, ignorant, and condemning himself to perpetual ignorance, of the throbbings of that noble heart, rendered all the more sensitive by its constant trials. His self-satisfaction deadened his sympathies, destroyed his power of observation, narrowed his capacity for experience, and made his life a smaller thing than God intended it to be. Yes, it is very dangerous to put men in different categories from ourselves. Differences there are between man and man, differences that may have to be noted and expressed; but there are no differences which justify us in forming a class of "other men" in sharp and decided contrast to ourselves.

For it must ever be the case that an advance in spiritual life means a deepening of human sympathy, means a growing intelligence of the mind of Him whose dying tongue could utter the prayer, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." Increased familiarity with the things of heaven, increased communion with God, must lead to

greater love for our fellow-men. It is by virtue of our relations towards them that we are what we are. Our nature is dormant till it is awakened by intercourse; we become conscious of ourselves by contact with others. He is the greatest man who recognizes his equality with the largest number of his fellows. A religious system, a religious aim, which cuts us off from sympathy with others, is to be looked at with suspicion; for it impoverishes our soul's experience of those means of instruction, those opportunities of discipline, which God has placed around the path of our pilgrimage.

~~But, further than this,~~ self-satisfaction is destructive to the desire for progress. ~~This, I think, is the real head and front of the Pharisee's offending;~~ it certainly is the reason why we of the present day are chiefly inclined to judge him hardly. Observe that the Pharisee was not only a strictly religious, but a strictly moral, man. He did not use religious observances as a cloak for self-indulgence. Not only did he fast twice in the week, but he abhorred the sins of the flesh. Not only did he give tithes of all that he acquired, but he hated extortion and injustice. His religion distinctly led him to the performance of his moral duties, and made him a worthy member of civil society. But we feel that, when he had reached the point of thanking God that he was not as other men are, he had little ~~chance of further growth. This is the danger of self-satisfaction:~~ it is destructive of effort, and without continued effort it is difficult to keep the level already gained. This truth is readily recognized as regards the intellectual life, but less readily recognized, at all events in practice, in its bearing on the moral and religious life. In literature we are acute enough critics, and demand that each new book

of a writer should mark a distinct advance of his knowledge, an increased firmness of grasp upon his material. Repetition, even when it is facile and agreeable, we pronounce to be a token of failure. If the motive be old, we nevertheless require that it should be brought nearer home to us by greater clearness of illustration or more touching emphasis of statement. An artist who has hit upon a popular theme, and is content to repeat it in forms that become more and more thin, loses his reputation, and sinks below the rank to which his early work gave him a title. In fact, we praise and admire oftentimes the promise as much as the performance, and are attracted by hope for the future more than we are satisfied by present attainment. We all know the dangers of premature success, the failures that arise from self-satisfaction, the lassitude that is created by measuring our own achievements with the achievements of others, and finding the balance in our favour. We know that in science, in literature, and in art, it is fatal to rest contented, and that a divine discontent is the most precious gift of heaven to the man of genius.

But then, science and literature and art are spheres for the man of genius; and we are ready enough to judge him severely, and enforce upon him a high sense of his obligations towards mankind. Morals and religion, on the other hand, are affairs of ordinary men; and in them we are only concerned with enforcing a decent average. This is surely unfair. Every one is bound to pursue knowledge up to the limit of his capacity and opportunity; and every one is equally bound to develop, to the best of his power, his moral and religious sense. To rest satisfied with a decent average is to prepare the way for a general decline.

The pursuit of the religious ideal is sometimes reproved



as engendering selfishness. The soul, it is said, engaged in the practice of religious observances forgets its duties towards its fellow-men while it seeks to work out its own salvation. The implication is that morality, if pursued without reference to religion, would become less self-regarding. It is more in agreement with the observed facts of human nature to infer that moral practice, apart from religion, would aim only at the decent average necessary for an orderly society, and would rapidly decay for want of any further ideal. For surely moral practice, resting solely on the basis of moral philosophy, is exposed to as many temptations as if it rested on the basis of religion. It is quite as likely to become formal, or narrow, or prejudiced, or hypocritical. And it has the disadvantage that its basis would be apprehended by a much smaller number of persons, that its sanction would be more entirely external, that the checks upon self-deception would be much less operative. A universal conscience founded solely upon utilitarianism would be more flexible than any conscience which has yet been organized upon a religious basis.

The defect of the Pharisee is really owing to the fact that he is a social moralist at heart, and has dressed up his morality and made it into a religion. He is engaged in doing his duties to society; he detests anti-social vices, and denounces them, and sets his face sternly against all whom he suspects of practising them. Then he transfers to his relations towards God this system of outward observance, this code of social duty, whereby he is busily engaged in promoting the greatest happiness of the greatest number. He does his duty to God on the same principles as he does his duty towards his neighbour. God's rights are carefully examined and allowed, God's dues are punctually paid.



The ideal of a well-ordered commonwealth is transferred from earth to heaven. In short, the Pharisee is a type of the sensible and practical religion which aims, above all things, at influencing society and working moral reform. Again, I say, our Lord did not condemn him, but He pointed out that his position was only the second best, and was beset by dangers, chief amongst which was this: that while professing to work for progress, he ran a great risk of destroying in himself the capacity for progress, and shrinking to a repeater of commonplaces, robbed of all vital energy, and bereft of genuine inspiration. There is no difficulty in setting ourselves and the world straight, if we may reduce both within limits suited to our capacity of dealing with them. To face the world as it is, to know our real selves, requires an amount of humility and teachableness which are incompatible with self-satisfaction.

So we come back again to the perception of the fact that the real defect of the Pharisee was, that in his desire for self-satisfaction he was losing the hunger and thirst after righteousness, which is the motive of a religious life. Science advances through the temper displayed by him who, when asked to undertake some remunerative work, answered proudly, "I have no time to grow rich." Knowledge grows by the devotion of the scholar whose enthusiasm raises him above the allurements of ordinary ambition, and who is content to devote his life to minute and laborious research, which may be useful at some future time to another. Art learns to embody new forms of beauty by the unceasing pursuit of an ideal, which the artist finds himself powerless to express in visible or intelligible forms, but which he is drawn onwards to pursue with growing ardour and increasing dissatisfaction with the

results of his own endeavours. Is there to be no corresponding motive in the practise of morals, in the art of politics, in the efforts to regenerate the world? If so, where is that motive to be found? Not in the admirable theories of duty propounded by the Pharisee, not in his smug self-satisfaction with his own achievements, but in the muttered cry of the Publican, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." In fact, the Pharisee, looked at from the moral point of view, was a pedant; the Publican was a man of genius. The one could utter commonplaces which carried the world no further; the other was cherishing for men the sacred flame of devotion and sacrifice.

But, it may be urged, this view is certainly disappointing when applied to the religious life. That all objects of earthly pursuits should be unsatisfactory—that is natural; but that the same sense of failure should dog us in our relations to God—this is a gloomy doctrine. Are we to have no certainty of our acceptance? no sense of rest and repose? The answer is obvious, but it is worth stating. The pursuit of knowledge leads scholars to a greater and greater pleasure in the pursuit, but to a greater and greater sense of the vastness of the field, and of their own impotence to traverse more than a very small portion of it. The pursuit of beauty gives the artist keen inward pleasure; but as the pleasure increases, he becomes more dissatisfied with his own power to produce for others the objects of his own inward vision. Similarly, the pursuit of righteousness, the growing love for God, fill the soul with a joy and contentment which nothing else can give, but at the same time beget a feeling of growing self-abhorrence. In short, the more we are satisfied with God the less we are satisfied with self. The Pharisee, unwilling to accept this, had ingeniously contrived

to stop at a middle point; when he had seen as much of God as was compatible with maintaining his good opinion of himself, he wished to see no more, and preferred to turn his eyes on his fellow-men, and measure himself by reference to them. Yet, surely, if any subject of contemplation be infinite, it is God; if any object can kindle a desire for its pursuit, it is righteousness; if anything can create despair of its attainment, it is holiness. There is a "peace of God which passeth all understanding;" but it is a peace coming from God, not won by our own effort. To know God at all, to see Him ever so little, is peaceful, tranquilizing, encouraging, but it does not fill us with self-satisfaction. It leads us through self-distrust to self-forgetfulness. "Yea verily, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: . . . that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, . . . that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, . . . Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which I was apprehended by Christ Jesus."

"I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other"—justified, that is, to himself, with a greater sense of rest in God and trustfulness in Him. In short, the Publican went home the happier because the more blessed man of the two. The Pharisee marshalled his facts excellently; no one could say a word against him, and he deserved every token of respect. Yet, somehow, he went away with a certain sense of something lacking. He had made out a case why he should be satisfied with himself, but at the bottom of his heart he wondered if he were. He seemed to have attained his end, yet it did not give him the pleasure which he had expected. There is a ring of

disappointment in the catalogue which he recites. He is reminding himself, rather than God, of his achievements, and is insisting upon his right to feel satisfied rather than enjoying real satisfaction.

The Publican sought for no satisfaction, yet it came of itself. He only went to the Temple to humble himself, and lo, he went away exalted, at peace with God, at peace with himself, comforted, consoled. He, like the Pharisee, had done his best to promote righteousness in the world, and to live in nearness to God ; but his efforts only brought him a painful sense of their futility. He had done nothing ; he had achieved nothing ; his schemes had failed ; his motives had been misinterpreted ; he had shrunk at the decisive moment from making the bold avowal or striking the courageous blow ; he could not manage to speak intelligibly to his fellows, to show them his deep desire to do them service, to assure them of his sympathy, to merit the honour of being summoned to their aid. And when last he stood in the Temple court, what excellent resolutions he had made ; what noble designs had floated before his eyes ; how easy they seemed of accomplishment. But he had sadly found that multitudes of unexpected difficulties gathered round him the moment he tried to put his plans into execution—difficulties minute, impalpable, inexplicable ; the very air seemed full of them, and nature itself seemed to oppress him when he strove to act according to the spirit of his inward vision. All he could say was that he had failed—failed hopelessly and miserably—failed as he had hoped and trusted never to fail again. All he could do was to beat upon his breast and cry, “ God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

Yet he went down to his house justified rather than the

other. Peace came to him, though he sought it not. How came it from so unpromising a beginning? The answer is, that instead of the approval of self-satisfaction, he received the joy of pardon, and with pardon a renewal of hope and strength.

Now, it has lately been urged that the Christian teaching about forgiveness is immoral and anti-social; it weakens the sense of responsibility, and hides from a man the inevitable truth that a wrong done cannot be undone, a truth which is the real deterrent from vice. A great deal might be said on this point; I am only concerned to show that the desire for pardon is the result of a sense of failure, and that a sense of failure is inseparable from any worthy appreciation of the task undertaken. Destroy the desire for pardon, and you leave only the motive of self-satisfaction. I say self-satisfaction; for the motive of satisfying some standard of social duty imposed from outside would be no motive to doing things, but only a motive to seem to do them, or not to be discovered in doing the opposite. Moral motives must appeal to the individual, and must be voluntarily recognized and adopted by deliberate choice.

Nay, I do not see how a man is ever to reach self-satisfaction without having passed through a period where he was very conscious of the need for pardon. However excellent may be our intentions, life is complicated, and our relations to others are hard to adjust. Ofttimes we do mischief without meaning to do so; ofttimes we err through inexperience. In moral matters, as in all else, a man has frequently to buy his experience at the cost of others. I do not think that the abolition of the Christian conception of forgiveness would dispense with casuistry,

unless, indeed, man were reduced to an obedient automaton, which seems to be the ideal of some modern systems of social reform.

But this is idle. We Christians will not apologize for the joy of forgiveness; it is not immoral, but is the sole foundation of all moral progress. We will not explain away the language of self-abasement before God's holiness, for it expresses the very literal truth about ourselves, and the knowledge of this truth is not depressing, but stimulating; it does not lead to indolence, but to effort. So far from being an inducement to rest content with feeble achievements, it renews perpetually the sense of an infinite responsibility. I read a saying of a simple man which illustrates the penetrating power of a sense of unworthiness to rouse the soul to cheerful effort. Few men spent a life of more constant labour, and displayed a more joyous spirit through it all, than did Egidius, one of the earliest of the companions of S. Francis of Assisi. Surprised at seeing him sitting unemployed for a moment, a passer-by asked him one day, "Egidius, what are you doing?" "Evil," was the answer. "What, you, a good friar, doing evil?" "Tell me," said Egidius, "is God more ready to give His grace or we to receive?" "God to give," was the reply. "Then are we right?" "No, wrong." "Just so," concluded Egidius; "I told you that I was doing wrong." Such is the temper of the men who move the world, who labour without ceasing, who keep alive the belief in the possibility of progress.

The feeling of our own weakness, the consciousness of failure, the sense of sin,—these are not merely individual feelings, but they are the chief source and spring of man's moral efforts and of his activity in the world of men.



Without them all work would be mechanical and external ; society would stratify, hypocrisy would be dominant, and all noble aims would decay. And these feelings can only be kept alive by the sense of forgiveness, by the joy of pardon, by the renewal of hope, by the comfort of restoration, by the sense of increased strength bestowed from on high. " I can do nothing by myself," " I can do all things through God which strengtheneth me." These are co-ordinate propositions ; and the connecting link between them is the sense of pardon, the hope of which makes the first avowal possible, the reception of which inspires the grand enthusiasm of the second.

It has been said that the great object of Christianity, after all, is to make men say, and mean, and understand, the words, " Our Father." The chief moral quality exhibited in the parental relation is that of forgiveness. The mother views her helpless babe with the tenderest pity ; and the obviousness of its helplessness is the source of the depth of her devotion and of the passion of her love. Each step in the child's development repeats the same story. On the one side are rules, precepts, admonitions, given in kindness and love, given in wisdom, and enforced to avoid future ills ; on the other side, forgetfulness, heedlessness, disobedience, powerlessness to consider and reflect, waywardness, want of self-restraint, pursuit of the momentary pleasure. It is only the joy of exercising the power of pardon that enables the parent day by day to resume with new hope a work which has caused him many disappointments. It is only as the capacity of remorse for disobedience is displayed, that the possibility of moral advance becomes apparent in the child. It is only for a few years in the life of each of us that this relationship exists ; and the child has forgotten his childhood



before he becomes a father. But God's revelation of Himself gives back to us in varied forms, what our own experience might set forth to each, that the joy of pardon is a joy which is in the being of God. The joy of receiving pardon is but a faint reflex of the joy of Him who gives. For pardon can only be given to one who seeks it, and to seek it is to admit a consciousness of past failure, and express a desire for future progress.

“The Lord is full of compassion and gracious,  
Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.  
He will not alway be chiding,  
Neither keepeth He His anger for ever.  
He hath not dealt with us after our sins,  
Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.  
For as the heaven is high above the earth,  
So great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.  
As far as the east is from the west,  
So far hath He set our transgressions from Him.  
Like as a father pitieth His children,  
So the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.”

These are the tones of hopefulness ; these are the utterances of one who is strong and resolute. It is impossible to work out the brotherhood of men on any system that does not rest upon the fullest recognition of the fatherhood of God.



THE UNITY OF LIFE.



# THE UNITY OF LIFE.

*(Preached in Westminster Abbey.)*

“What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?”—Ps. viii. 4.

THESE words represent a feeling that seems far removed from our ordinary way of looking at the world. They indicate a sense of the littleness, the insignificance of man, whereas all our talk, all our theories, all our current principles, are founded upon a sense of man's greatness, and of his unlimited capacity for fruitful discovery of means to master the world and reduce it to obedience. Yet the utterance of the Psalmist represents a phase of thought and feeling which still has a certain place, and expresses a certain amount of truth. The question, “What is man?” still occurs to the mind of the individual at some periods of his life's experience. He may be supported, in habitual circumstances, by the sense of companionship, by the organization of society, by the general atmosphere of his surroundings; but there come times when these desert him, when reflection claims him, when outward things drop away, when he stands, not as a product of society, not as a creature of civilization, but as a naked individual who has to make good his position against adverse powers, and has to give an account of the rights which he claims.

So it was with the writer of this Psalm, whom I regard as David, the young shepherd lad who tended his father's sheep upon the hills of Bethlehem. There in the stillness of the night, when no cloud dimmed the lustre of an eastern sky, when the countless stars looked down upon him from above, when he alone was waking, and there was nothing that reminded him of man's activity, he felt himself in his entire solitude face to face with nature, and was overawed by the sense of a terrible and remorseless power. The meteors shot across the heavens; he knew not whence they came nor whither they went. Everything was a wonder and a bewilderment. There was no one to whom he could turn, no one to make answer, and his spirit sank within him. It was but for a moment, this feeling of helplessness. He was master of a spell whereby he could lay the terrible apparition. He was not alone, for God was with him; and in the sense of God's presence he recovered his power and freed himself from his bondage. The heaven was the work of God's fingers; by Him the sun and moon were ordained; and he was nearer to God, after all, than they. His terror before the power of nature gave way to wonder at God's purposes. "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou so ~~regard~~ <sup>regardest</sup> him?" Man so small, so feeble, so limited, when compared with the mighty forces at work outside him—why should he be chosen to such excellency? There was no answer save the answer of faith. Against the appalling vastness of the revelation of nature he could only set his confidence in the Divine revelation handed down by his forefathers. "Have dominion," said God to Adam. "Into your hand they are delivered," was the message to Noah. Those who believed these commissions were delivered from the thralldom of

nature, and received the consciousness of a spiritual being. He could not explain all this, but he felt it. "Thou madest him to have dominion over the work of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet." So it was; and the man within him leapt up in recognition of the truth, and he again was strong. But as he felt his strength he recognized also its responsibility, and bowed his head before the Author of his great commission. "O Lord, our Governor, how excellent is Thy Name in all the world."

Life is eternally new, and yet eternally old. The question raised by the simple observation of the peasant lad is not solved by the careful and organized observations of the modern man of science. Let him explore as he will, let him deduce laws and trace to simple causes the manifoldness of the external world, the question still recurs, "What is man?" The answer still has to follow the old lines, "Man has dominion; let him rest content with that knowledge." But man cannot rest content with that only. He asks the further question, "Why has he dominion? Is it because he is the craftiest, the subtlest, the greediest, the most rapacious amongst animals? Or is he alone endowed with a spiritual nature, as the token of a Divine commission for his pre-eminence?" The revelation of nature, taken by itself, is still at variance with the instincts of man's moral nature, and threatens the individual consciousness with annihilation. Nature, "red in tooth and claw with ravine," is only terrific. Man has more to unlearn than to learn before he commits himself to her unaided guidance. The revelation of nature needs to be supplemented by the revelation of God before we can find a beneficent purpose in the upward striving of a spiritual life.

But it is not only when man is alone with nature that



the sense of his littleness is borne in upon his mind. The question raised in the 8th Psalm is repeated in the 144th: "Lord, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him?" But the circumstances which prompted the question are widely different. We do not know when the psalm was written, or what are the events to which it refers. Its general purport, however, is clear enough. It expresses the writer's exultation at some signal victory which crowned the arms of Israel. "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight; . . . who subdueth my people under me." The temper of mind is not that of subjection to an external power, not a feeling of helplessness. It is the consciousness of power, the flush of success, the glory of triumph. But in the very moment when the heart beats fastest with joy comes the haunting contrast. Israel conquered; the enemy fled. The host of Israel returns home triumphant; the foe lies dead upon the field. Whence came this great difference? What is the meaning of this sharp division? No one knew so well as the leader the narrow issues on which hung the fortune of the fight. For a moment the ranks wavered; for a moment his heart sank within him. There was an agonized cry, a desperate rally, a supreme effort, and all was well. The sudden recovery was the decisive act. The ebbing tide of human beings slowly turned, and presently swept away all its opponents into scattered fragments. How came it to be so? The foe also was fighting for hearth and home. For each of the warriors engaged wife and children were anxiously waiting. Yet one side conquered, the other was routed; some were ignominiously slain, others rejoiced in the pride of victory. The victor recognized more clearly than did

the vanquished the feebleness, the littleness of man. He could not account for his success; he knew that in another battle, under slightly altered circumstances, to-day's decision might be reversed. He knew the limits of his own forethought, the impossibility of security. He had conquered; how if he had been defeated? He shuddered at the thought, and experience had only brought it nearer to him. No wonder that he, too, cried out, "What is man? Is he a puppet in the hand of fate? Is he the sport of circumstance? On what do his fortunes depend?" Again these questionings were answered, not by man's unaided wisdom, but by an appeal to God's revelation made in the times of old. The Psalmist had heard with his ears, and his fathers had declared to him, the story of God's call, whereby the people of Israel received the assurance of their national commission. He had conquered, not by any merits of his own, but because he was fulfilling God's command. His own individual life and the life of his people were alike part of the Divine purpose. He had conquered because God had work for him to do, because the national life of Israel contained elements of spiritual power, which were bound to survive amid the clash and tumult of the world. "It is God who giveth salvation unto kings; who delivereth his servant from the hurtful sword." And this help of God was the reward of faithful service. God aided his people that they might obey his laws. There rose before the Psalmist's eyes a splendid picture of a time of peace and happiness, when the young men would grow up like plants, and the maidens like corner-stones polished for the building of a palace. "Happy are the people that is in such a case; yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord."

Again the Psalmist's questioning has an abiding meaning.

n.p.

The student of human society, the teacher who strives to glean lessons for the future from the experience of the past, has still to face the problem, "What is man?" He cannot escape the conclusion that no social organization can contain more than does the average of the individuals of which it is composed. He sees that success does not always follow upon wisdom; he cannot explain all the forces which are at work. So far as he can explain them, he knows that his explanation was rarely before the minds of the chief actors in the events which he analyzes. One conclusion forces itself upon his mind, that nations were strong in the past in proportion as they had a consciousness of a mission, and that individual leaders were powerful so far as they could impress this conviction on the minds of their followers. History gives no warrant for the belief that human society can be reduced to a machine. Perfect the mechanism as we may, there remains the supply of a motive power. Patriotism is in itself an empty name. Men love their country because their country means to them an opportunity of leading their life according to the ideas which give that life a meaning. Civilizations founded upon material progress have fallen before civilizations founded upon an ideal impulse. Man must determine what he is, before he can decide how he shall act. He can only measure success and failure in reference to some certain end. Ideas may be reduced for a time to silence by brute force, but they reassert their indestructible power. The highest ideal of what man may become affords the most abiding motive alike for action and endurance. The revelation of history is incomplete without the revelation of God.

Again, a third time in the record of Old Testament Scripture, does the question of ~~my~~ <sup>the</sup> text occur, and again

in new circumstances. Amid the overwhelming desolation which had unexpectedly fallen upon him, the patriarch Job utters the despairing cry, "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him, . . . and that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" In the greatness of his distress all outward helps had fallen from him, and he was driven back upon his inmost self. He sought there for the cause of his misfortunes, but could not find it. His friend could only utter commonplaces, and point to the old axiom that punishment followed upon sin. Job vainly asked him to lay his finger upon the spot, and show him wherein he had acted unjustly out of wilfulness. No, there was for him neither consolation nor explanation possible. Misery had come upon him, complete and crushing; disaster, which it was beyond his power to avert. The fact was terribly obvious; the reason was past his power to discover. No wonder that he sent forth the despairing cry, "What is man?" He had trusted in God, and had been happy. He thought that he understood the law of life. Miserable fool that he was, and keenly alive to his folly as he listened to the orthodox administrations of his estimable friend. How glibly they tripped from his tongue, how plausible they were; only they were not true. It was not the actual pressure of his misfortunes which weighed so heavily on Job, as the sense of the complete overthrow of the principles on which his life had been built. He thought his feet were set upon a rock, and lo, his footing had entirely slipped. The God whom he had tried to serve had deserted him, and he was oppressed by the awfulness of the solitude in which he found himself. "What is man?" he cried. And the riddle seemed to him only the more insoluble because he had before found its solution in the presence of God. Were

all the affections which he had cherished, all the aspirations which he had welcomed, all the integrity of heart which he had cultivated,—were all these things useless? Was he who had battled for the true and just to be blown about amid the dust, and sealed within the iron hills? Amid the wreckage of his life he was tempted to resent the fact that he had ever known God and had learned the joy of communion with Him. It were almost better had he lived without the knowledge of One whose yoke was intolerable. Yet he felt that could not be; he could not forego the soul's life that still pulsed within him, the being that had been created in that belief in God. "How long wilt Thou not depart from me?" We know that an answer came at length to Job's questionings—an answer that raised him in the scale of spiritual being. He learned so much by his experience, painful as it was, that all his past knowledge was as nothing in comparison. "I heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Job's question also is one which is repeated in succeeding generations. To many souls the trials and sorrows of life come with appalling force, to shake them out of their self-complacency, and bid them look into their inmost self. Superficial theories pass away in a moment; the flimsy equipment furnished by social surroundings, which sufficed for current talk, and supplied a satisfactory motive for languid practice, is seen to be of no avail. Friends come and go, and utter commonplaces, all very true, no doubt, but which do not touch the only question which is at issue. For the first time the soul is asked to stand absolutely alone, face to face with its own responsibility, and shuddering at the blankness which surrounds it. "What is man?"

The question must be answered. He is not a bundle of habits, not a product of society, not a nursling of the state. These answers would have passed muster a few days ago. The sufferer in his weakness longs that they would satisfy him still. He tries to repeat them to himself, but his parched lips refuse to utter them aloud. He is conscious, it may be for the first time, of unsuspected depths in his being, of a capacity for sincerity, and a power of penetration which he had never known before. He must gain some firm basis of truth ; he must replace his shattered self ; he must know who and what he is. The revelation of life calls for something to give it a meaning.

The considerations through which I have endeavoured to lead you are not, I think, either arbitrary or fanciful. Nature, history, life—these are the three sources of all knowledge ; from them, either separately or together, all our theories are deduced, with them our practice is concerned. What we wish to discover is the nature of our relationship to each of these, and the basis on which it rests. Our daily occupations depend on the assertion of man's power to bend the outward world to his own purposes. On the power of adjusting national and international relationships depend man's freedom and his opportunity for the development of his faculties. On his attitude towards his immediate surroundings depends the success or failure of the individual life. All these truths are not new, but very old. No problem besets us nowadays which has not always beset mankind. ~~I have shown you these problems as they~~ were presented to thinking men in a remote period of the world's history. ~~I have shown you how~~ in each case the problem was solved by faith in God, how the revelation of God's nature and relation to man taught those who grasped



it to recognize their true dignity, and maintain themselves against the stress of outward circumstances and inward fear.

It is not without significance that a Christian writer in the New Testament has amplified the old answer in the light of the fuller revelation of God in Christ Jesus. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews discusses David's childlike apprehension of man's position, and points out that it was hard to uphold in the face of advancing experience. David was content with an assertion of the fact of man's dominion ; he could not indicate the method of that dominion or its extent. He asserted in the simplicity of his faith, "Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet." The New Testament writer pauses and says, "But now we see not yet all things subjected to him." Man's primacy could no longer be merely asserted ; it must be felt and proved. And the proof was there : "We behold Him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour." We see "the Author of our salvation made perfect through sufferings." Yes, the life and death of Jesus was the eternal glorification of the life of man, was the justification of all man's claims to greatness, was the never-failing source of all human dignity.

Do we ask "What is man?" in relation to the outward world? In the light of the Incarnation we know that we are the children of God, here, on this earth ; that nature is not some alien and opposing force, but is linked with man's destiny. "The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God, in hope that it may be delivered from the bondage of corruption." Yea, nature is animate with a Divine purpose, which finds its highest expression in the upward struggles of the human soul.



2

Do we ask "What is man?" in relation to the changes and chances of human society? In the revelation of the risen Lord we know that our "citizenship is in heaven," and are able to seek the things that are above. There we see the law of righteousness, which must prevail in all human relationships, if they are to be of any abiding worth. We learn to mortify our members which are upon the earth. We recognize in the history of the past the operation of these unrighteous desires, on account of which the wrath of God came upon the children of disobedience. We look forward hopefully to the advent of a time when the kingdoms of the world may become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

3

Do we ask "What is man?" in relation to his own individual trials? In the Cross of Christ we see reflected the sinfulness of human nature and the possibility of its recreation. If the Author of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, we, too, can say, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been approved he shall receive the crown of life." "When he hath been approved." Who that claims so great a reward would refuse to show the stuff of which he is made, knowing, as he does, that God with the temptation makes also the way of escape?

Look at it as we will, we have to face the fact that neither the study of nature, nor the study of society, nor the experience of individual life, can by themselves lead to results which we can accept as satisfactory. They tell us of struggle and sacrifice, which, apart from the belief in a higher life and in a spiritual being, destroy man's freedom, and reduce him to a machine. The answers to the question "What is man?" are incomplete, unless they attempt to

solve it in union with that further question, "What is God?" And the claim of the Christian religion upon the minds of men rests ultimately on this, that it enables the answer to these two questions to be carried into every detail of human life and experience. It intimately associates God and man, and sheds the light of God's presence on every problem which life or knowledge can raise. Christianity—let me put it so—is eminently a religion of common sense. "Looking unto Jesus;" the secret lies there, in the revelation of the Person of our Lord. "What is man?" Jesus Christ Himself is the answer. He alone explains the possibilities of man's nature and man's life; nay, that life and nature He not only explains, but is ready to give. There may be mysteries in the Christian conception of life; there are greater mysteries in any other. "What is man?" It is a great question which in our indolence we do not care to face. We may be content to rest in the region of notions, suggestions, plausibilities. There is a fashion in modes of thought, as in all else. But he who wishes to know the truth sweeps fashion to one side, and penetrates into the reality of things. In answer to the question, "What is man?" the Christian silently points to the Person of our Lord. No one by his thinking has gone further, or has produced an answer so large, so universal, so abiding. Men come and go, empires pass away, ideas grow obsolete; but amongst all the changes of human affairs

"That one face grows,  
And decomposes but to recompose."

THE CHRISTIAN STANDARD.



# THE CHRISTIAN STANDARD.

*(Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral.)*

“How can ye believe which receive the glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from God ye seek not?”—ST. JOHN v. 44 (R.V.).

THE words of Jesus, when He accounts for man's unbelief, are most worthy of our serious attention—not so much for the purpose of explaining to our satisfaction the unbelief of others, as for the purpose of trying the sincerity and thoroughness of our own faith. Let us remember that God says to each man, “My son, give me thine heart.” And too many of us answer, “Lord, I give Thee my intellectual assent.” One way of combating unbelief, so easy that it is easily forgotten, is to “let our light so shine before men that they may be led to glorify our Father which is in heaven.” One cause of unbelief, which it is in the power of each one of us to remove, is the imperfect recognition by Christians of their individual lives as part of that manifestation of the Son of God, which is to destroy the works of the devil. We are called to be partakers in that vast process by which the kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. This is to be done by the practical potency of the religious convictions of those who call themselves by Christ's name. I would turn your attention to

some of the hindrances which beset us in this, our great work for Christ.

In the passage from which my text is taken, Jesus is accounting for the causes which led men to stand aloof from Him. "Ye will not come to Me, that ye may have life." Then, as though to answer the taunt begotten of suspicion, He goes on: "I receive not glory from men. But I know that ye have not the love of God in yourselves. How can ye believe which receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh of the only God ye seek not?" There are two great reasons here given for unbelief: (1) men have no love of God; (2) they seek not the glory that comes from the only God. Let us consider for a little the second of these obstacles to the growth of faith.

"The glory that we receive one of another;" "the glory that cometh of the only God." Do we recognize these as contradictory? Surely, it may be urged, in a Christian society these ought not to be, and need not be, conflicting motives; it is possible, it is natural, to combine the praise of men and the praise of God. Observe, however, that the words of the text mark a different attitude towards these two sources of renown: "Ye *receive* the praise of men; the praise of God ye *seek* not." The rebuke is not for receiving the one, but for ceasing to seek the other. The danger lies in the substitution of an attitude of passive acceptance for one of active effort. It is easy to denounce the world wholesale, with the result of making it appear that we alone are right; but the cry, "I, even I, only am left," is barren and untrue. The world presents to every one a moral heritage of great value, of which he is bound to take possession. The first point of the moral discipline of every man consists in exploring and acquiring for himself the

current maxims, the current rules, the current aims of the society of which he forms a part. If he does this satisfactorily, he receives the praise of men, and it is well for him that so it should be. But the question is, Does he rest content with this patent of respectability? Is that the goal of his aspiration? Is there no conscious pursuit of something which the world cannot give? The danger of receiving glory one of another lies in the temptation to rest satisfied therewith, to make that the end of life which is in reality only its beginning. It is as though a man who had made one great discovery rested content with that achievement, and abandoned all further aims. Surely there is laid upon him the obligation to try and extend the field of human knowledge in some way or another, to systematize some part of it, to make it more accessible to others, to carry it to places where it was not carried before, or at least to go forth to his work in life in such a spirit as to heighten the intellectual standard of those amongst whom his lot is cast.

This is obvious in matters of the head ; it is not so clear in matters of the heart. It is easier to see the duty of raising the standard of knowledge, in spite of the apathy of contented ignorance, than it is to see the corresponding duty of raising the standard of moral and spiritual aspiration. The ignorant at the present day have an almost superstitious reverence for the value of knowledge. The careless have no such reverence for the value of moral and spiritual endeavour. That cannot be pursued solely by reference to man's approval. Whatever glory we may receive of men, we must be consciously seeking after the glory that cometh of the only God. Attention to the verdict of respectability will not carry us very far.

I would not, however, be understood to urge you to



disregard this verdict as unworthy of attention. The man who goes forth to spread knowledge knows more than is known by those whom he undertakes to teach ; he aims at advancing their knowledge to a higher stage. So, too, he who would increase the moral and spiritual force of others, must himself have passed through all their experiences in the first place, and by his sympathy with their problems must try and lead them to a loftier sense of duty, and a fuller realization of the dignity and nobility of their life. Nothing that is to endure can be done rashly ; no good work can be founded on contempt. The praise of men—receive it if it comes to you ; but seek after the glory that cometh of the only God.

The question, then, is one concerning the standard of life. Let each man ask himself about his own. Does it come from the accidental opinions of those around him, or is it set by a heartfelt desire to seek after the glory which comes from the only God ? Men speak of the changeableness of man's opinion, of the uncertainty of this world, of the impossibility of pleasing every one, and often assume that this general conviction is a testimony to the loftiness of their own aim. Do they not, all the same, habitually find their sole satisfaction in the glory they receive one of another ? We like to moralize at times on the variableness of life, the reverses of fortune, the vicissitudes of man's estate. Perhaps we do this with greater freedom because it gives us an opportunity to hug ourselves contentedly with the thought of the security which we gain by insignificance. Aspiring men often fall—so much the better for ourselves who do not venture to aspire. Men, whose name were in every one's mouth are now forgotten—how comforting for us who have not the energy nor the capacity to reach

any lofty height. Let us not flatter ourselves that we have risen above ordinary temptations because at times we are driven to confess the vanity of that which passeth away.

“They receive glory one of another.” Is not this a description of our ordinary life? We sometimes moralize over our disappointments; we complain of man’s ingratitude; we talk as though we were weaned from the world. But I would ask you frankly, Has not the world given you all that you have a right to expect? I do not think that the world deals hardly with the great mass of folk. The world, after all, is not an unkindly place, and does not refuse its due meed of acknowledgment. We all receive as much affection as our amiability calls forth. We generally receive an adequate recognition of our services to our fellows. Perhaps every one does not value us so highly as we value ourselves; but we ought in fairness to confess that this is an extreme demand to make. There is no more common malady than a discontented egotism, which inwardly complains that its true greatness is misunderstood. Such a complaint is morbid and unworthy. The world’s standard is sensible and intelligible. It cannot take into account excellent intentions which lead to no results. It cannot appraise delicate feelings which are too fine to be converted into action. It has no time to lend a sympathizing ear to noble aspirations which have no definite end. The world can only weigh the actual activity, can only value the accomplished fact. The world nowadays is very tolerant and large-hearted. It will take any work that is tangible and definite, and will give a hearty meed of recognition. There is not much difficulty in the way of any one who wishes to receive glory at its hands. Many, very many, go to it for what it will give. When they have

received their due, they clamour for more, and are disappointed that the measure of their demands is not filled up to their desire. Then they wrap themselves in their virtue. They declaim against man's ingratitude. They even dare to offer to God the world's leavings. They ask Him to take, and give them credit for, what the world's scales cannot weigh. This is an old story. Listen to the words of the prophet Malachi: "Ye have brought that which was taken by violence, and the lame and the sick: thus ye bring the offering. Should I accept it of your hands? saith the Lord of hosts." The truth is clear enough. God's service is one thing, and must be entire; the world's service is another thing. Let us not deceive ourselves. Yet how great is the temptation to turn to God as a solace for our injured pride, our wounded vanity! The world will not credit us for all we do. We take its credit readily as far as it goes, then we ask God to take the rest. Can we expect such offerings to rise before His throne? Can we expect His blessing on such half-hearted service?

This danger, this temptation, comes nearer to us than we like to confess. We do not like to stand in declared antagonism to the world, nor is it necessary that we should go out of our way to put ourselves in that position. But we must remember that pure religion demands that we should keep ourselves unspotted by the world. This can only be done by singleness of intention in God's service. This is easily professed, but how difficult it is to obtain! A man goes to his business, in which his object is success—success that can be measured by the standard of outward and tangible rewards. He has chosen a line of life which is honourable. He is engaged in an occupation which aims at supplying the wants of his fellow-men. At first his path

seems clear enough ; but you know, I doubt not, how soon difficulties arise. Examples of conventional dishonesty are manifest on every side. Bad customs, which usage has exempted from serious criticism, thrust themselves upon his notice. Where is he to begin to make his stand ? How far is he to assume a position of his own ? Is such a position possible ? Can he afford to incur ill-will by a scrupulousness which most men will consider affected ? As he reflects on one difficulty, another succeeds with bewildering rapidity. It seems the shortest way to do as others do. Such a course is easiest, and holds out the greatest prospect of success. Questions affecting business are, after all, to be judged by business men. Different occupations have different standards. The wise man recognizes this. The honourable man acts carefully up to the standard which he finds set for him by others. All this a man urges upon his conscience, and makes a bargain with it, by which he keeps one set of principles for his business affairs, and another for the regulation of his own private life. He tries to serve two masters ; and we know that this cannot be done. The harmony of the man's life is broken ; his moral and spiritual power is gone. He is uncertain, irresolute, wavering. His character grows commonplace ; his growth is stunted ; his force is lost. He may be respectable, and he may be respected ; but he receives glory from men, and ceases to seek after the glory that comes from God.

Again, all of us live amongst our fellows, and form part of what we call society. The principles that ought to guide us in this are simple. We wish to help, and please, and befriend one another. But is it easy to keep these motives in their integrity ? We come across different opinions, and

are angered. We engage in arguments, and are dimly conscious that some think we had the worst of it. Our vanity is hurt, and we conceive dislikes. We aim at personal triumphs, we strive for personal objects; we wish to show our own cleverness, to make the most of our own gifts; we vie one with another, we gossip, we spread scandal, we raise a laugh at the expense of others. Kindliness disappears, and personal objects remain. We feel this dimly, and try to hide from ourselves the fact that our aims are lowered. We readjust our life by limiting the sphere of our social activity. To most men we are indifferent, but we make a little circle of our own. We will be kind to those who admit our superiority. We will befriend those who flatter us by a sense of dependence on our help. We lead two separate lives, and hope that one will compensate for the other. Nothing is more sad than to come upon the traces of unsuspected generosity in one who was famous for a biting tongue and a graceful cynicism. He had been making his bargain with the world. He had given it much of himself. He had sought an outward reputation, of which he had grown weary; but he could not consent to lose it, worthless as it was. He was content to make an occasional offering at God's shrine.

I might trace the same temptation in works directly and avowedly undertaken in God's Name. Men devote themselves to serve God and their fellow-men, by philanthropy, or the service of the Church. The fact that their work is recognized to be for God makes them less careful of themselves. They grow absorbed and interested in some special matter; their capacity is admitted; they are looked up to; they have a following; their work bears fruits which are admired; they grow self-confident as they receive

glory of men; they are impatient of contradiction or restraint. Immersed in outward organization, accustomed to be listened to with applause, they lose the temper which alone gives value to their work. For the mild pleadings of the Gospel they substitute the trumpet voice of the law. Satisfied with the fact that the general scope of their work is to seek the glory that comes from God, they do not perceive that they are working out its details in the spirit of one who receives glory of men. Often, far too often, do we miss the Christlike temper in the lives of those who bear Christ's Name on their lips. The world has invaded them, and they know it not. Their work is not wholly an offering to God; and all in which the world has a share goes the way of the world, and has not the mark of eternity.

I need not multiply examples of this power of the world to lay its hand upon our offerings to God, and spoil them as they are rising on their way thither. The cause is always the same—we receive glory of men, instead of seeking after the glory that comes from God. We learn to rejoice in the method in which we work more than in its results; we wish for immediate approbation—approbation honourable enough in itself, but which is not the real reward. We delight not so much in the ultimate issue of the battle, as in the display of our personal prowess. We accept the world's judgment, and are anxious that it should be given at each moment in our favour.

This is a great danger, of serious consequences. Mark the words of Jesus: "How can ye believe which receive glory one of another?" It is the ruin of our spiritual vision; it is the destruction of our spiritual life. Those to whom Jesus spoke would not hear Him, because they were satisfied with themselves as they were. He offered them a



spiritual life, but they were contented with the natural life which they were leading. It was pleasant, it was busy, it was active. They had much to do, much to talk about, many schemes to devise, many objects to pursue. Men regarded them with respect, admired their wisdom, praised their tactics, looked on at the moves which they were skillfully making on the chess-board of life. Why should all this be disturbed? What more could be gained? They turned on their heels contemptuously when Jesus spoke of a new life which they were to learn from Him, and He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts. Let us not mistake the matter. The world has always been able to satisfy the natural man, who wishes to live honourably by the world's standard. It employs his activity, it rewards his labours, it recognizes his talents, it does homage to his virtue. There is only one condition set upon this satisfaction; it is that he should not wander beyond the world's sphere. Like the old fairy tales of the maiden in the enchanted garden, who might enjoy all things to the full, but was forbidden to pass beyond the boundary pale, such is the career of him who receives glory of men. He begins to suffer when he becomes conscious of higher aspirations, of longings unsatisfied, of a vaster and more real sphere beyond. For these higher aspirations the world has no place. But why should man complain? The world has given him all the reward that it has to give. Complaints of the world's ingratitude come from those who have awakened too late to a knowledge of their own selves. The world was not ungrateful to them, but they grew dissatisfied with the world's coin, and clamoured for a fuller recognition than the world could give. There was borne in upon them from some source or another the notion of a spiritual life.



This is the meaning of the rebuke of Jesus: "How can ye believe which receive glory one of another?" Such an end of life was a substitution of man's judgment for God's judgment, was a means of hiding the soul from God. The natural self might grow and prosper within the limits in which its growth was possible; the spiritual self could not awaken into being. However admirable may be a life which regulates itself according to man's judgment, it remains earthly, and is alien from God. However much such a life may strive after the highest ends that man's foresight can discover, it still remains outside the eternal harmony ordained of God. It is needful to remember this. Men tend to measure the influences at work around them by some definite standard. They count religion as one of many admirable agencies for the improvement of social life. All are agreed in wishing to see their fellow-men good and happy, virtuous and contented. All in some degree approve of anything that is likely to tend to this result. Most men speak kindly of some sensible form of Christianity which works for these results. Now, are we going to accept this position and live in this spirit? If so we shall fail, for the glory that we receive of men will check us from seeking after the glory that comes from God. The power of Christianity to mould the world is boundless, but it must work from within by transforming individual human souls. It is not a system of philanthropy, it is not a cure for social misery, that can be applied from without; but it brings to each man the message of redemption, and offers him a new nature, a new life, through faith in Christ Jesus. Now, as of old, men want something, but they do not want so much. No doubt the Jews listened with pleasure to some part of the teaching of Jesus; no doubt they approved of the clear way in which

He enforced what they already believed. But this call to "come to Him that they might have life" was too much for them. They had a life already, which in the main contented them. It might be improved a little here and there; but a new life—no, they did not want that. They turned away from such an offer, and passed it by unheeded.

Christianity is not the moral improvement of our natural life; it is the offer of a spiritual life in its stead. It is not concerned with enforcing the world's standard of respectability; it calls its followers to a consistent walk with God. It does not stand at man's judgment-seat; it appeals to the judgment of God. It does not lay down a number of maxims for the guidance of the world; it bids men seek after purity of intention, after the glory that cometh of the only God. Its results, its influence, cannot be weighed as can the results of human systems, of man's ideas and efforts after social good. Be they much or be they little, as man may reckon, they form the harmony of heaven.

There is a danger to ourselves of taking too low a view of our religion. We are too much inclined to meet the world half way, and let it take us and our efforts at its own estimate. True, it is not our business to protest; but we should so behave and speak as to show our sense of the meaning of our lives in Christ. The world may credit us as being worthy folk. We need not contradict it; but we should so act that it should be clear that we do not rest satisfied with receiving our glory of men, but seek after the glory that cometh of God. Christians will not commend their Christianity by being ready to drop the supernatural side of it, by speaking as though they walked according to the world's maxims, by being ready to translate their notions into the exact form of which the world approves. Nay,

this is dangerous to our own spiritual progress, to the work which as members of Christ's Church we are all called upon to share. We know of no other remedy for the woes of the world than faith in Christ. We know no other source of happiness than the consciousness of Christ's presence in the heart through the operation of His Holy Spirit. It is useless to complain that we live in a material age. The world at all ages has been engaged in material things ; it has not grown more material because it justifies its pursuit on a systematic basis, instead of acting without feeling any need of such justification. The world can only be overcome by a steadfast testimony to the abiding, unconquerable power of the soul that seeks its glory from the only God.

The truth is that every man must be doing one of two things, pleasing himself or pleasing God. Without God's help we cannot please Him. A man must either be leading a natural life, by his own strength, or a spiritual life, relying only on the strength that comes from God. So far as a man receives glory from men, he is trusting to himself ; he is measuring himself by the world's standard, he is taking the world's reward. It is this trust in self which keeps us from seeking our strength from God only. We forget that the entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven is promised to the poor in spirit, to those who become as little children. We forget that our spiritual life is founded on self-surrender unto God ; and our actual life here is the means whereby that surrender is wrought out in our soul, till we feel God always present with us. So far as we receive glory one of another we undo this process. When we turn to men they reflect to us our natural self ; they praise us for what we do of ourselves. Their praise confirms us in self-confidence, and checks us in our desire to submit ourselves to God only.

Hardness of heart is fostered by heedfulness to man's judgment. The more we attend to it, and the more we become immersed in things which appertain to the changing fashion of the world, the less we aspire after the eternal righteousness of God.

Consider for a moment the beauty, the strength of a character which seeks its glory from the only God. Such an one may not be richly endowed with natural gifts. He may do or say much as the ordinary man does or says. There may be nothing remarkable in his deeds or utterances, nothing that you can clearly measure out or appraise by the standard of human achievement. Yet you feel none the less that round him is breathed the atmosphere of a higher life, that in his presence all that is mean and ignoble hides its head. He may not be identified with any great movement which commands your allegiance, he may say nothing which you carry away with you as pregnant with instruction for yourself,—yet you feel like one who has been carried from the sultry air of the plain to a mountain-top, where the fresh life-giving breeze blows round you, till your pulse quickens, your energy returns, and you feel that you are braced for new efforts and larger attainments. What is the secret of the strength of such an one? It is that his life is harmonious, and fits together, so that nothing is lost. He has the simplicity which is the mark of all true greatness. He gives you a sense of reality and power; he carries you in spite of yourself before an eternal principle of judgment. Contrast him for a moment with many whom you know, who are half-hearted, and waver between the glory of man and the glory that cometh of God. They are conscious of strivings after something that they cannot obtain; they soar on uncertain wing, and demand that men should give them credit for the

nobility of their soaring. They call upon you to recognize their aspirations, to admire their originality, to sympathize with their disappointments, to wait with interest for the shadowy triumph which they one day promise. One while their glance is directed upwards ; then they pause and look around, uncertain of their progress. They wish to receive glory of men ; but the world heeds them not, and they are driven to take refuge in a little circle of those like-minded with themselves.

Look again at the man who seeks his glory from God. There is no waste in his life, for his aspirations and his aims are all part of his character, and all add to his strength. He is influential not only by what he does, but always by what he is. He is a standing testimony to the existence of something beyond and above the motives and activities of the world. He makes us feel the truth, the reality of the great issue of life as a whole, and shows how it is powerful to transform even the small details of action.

“ All that the world’s coarse thumb  
And finger failed to plumb,  
So passed in making up the main account ;  
All instincts immature,  
All purposes unsure,  
That weighed out as his work, yet swelled the man’s amount.  
Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act,  
Fancies that broke through language and escaped ;  
All I could never be,  
All men ignored in me,  
This I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.”



THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.





# THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

*(Preached before the University of Cambridge.)*

“The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.”—  
PHIL. iii. 8.

IF we ask ourselves what is the object of University life, I suppose that the answer is obvious. It is the development of the individual character into all that it can become. For this purpose we set in the chief place the training of intelligence, as being the highest and noblest of human capacities. But we are anxious that this development should not be exclusive nor one-sided. We are careful that the surroundings of the young life should be adapted to supply varied impulses. We cherish the memories of the past. We rejoice in the associations of a long intellectual heritage. We boast that the crudeness of unfettered aspiration and overweening self-confidence is led to take a larger view of its relation to the world by the dignity and impressiveness of institutions which breathe historic reverence. The architecture of our colleges tells its own tale. The faces of great men of past ages look down from their walls on each succeeding generation. The old-world customs of the place tell of venerable and almost forgotten antiquity. We count as not the least valuable of our educational machinery the records of past

piety and zeal which are embodied in shapes too palpable for the most careless to overlook. We know full well the value of their subtle and penetrating influence.

Again, the conditions of college life afford unparalleled opportunities for social intercourse ; for the development of a young man's interests and sympathies ; for the training of those powers whereby force, and energy, and readiness of expression are added to his more serious and sterling qualities. And round this life of dainty opportunities surges the actual life of the world outside, stirring the young to mimic emulation, and sometimes to praiseworthy efforts to fit themselves for the great arena in which they are one day to play their part. In the world, but not exactly of it—guarded, but not entirely sheltered, from outward impulses—the University boasts, and boasts truly, that it possesses all that is most needful for the formation of character, for the development and training of natural endowments.

It has sometimes seemed to me that there is one side of the value and importance of this splendid machinery which runs a risk of being overlooked in favour of another side which is more obvious. We have to face the great truth that it is comparatively easy to train any one to make the best of himself : it is a much more difficult matter to induce him to make that self better. It is one thing to make a man more pliant, more versatile, more capable, more ready to express himself in act or deed. It is another thing to make a man rise above his former self, to raise him to a higher level, to furnish him with fruitful principles. It is not enough that we should rest content with the easier task and wave aside the harder. It is not enough for a University to be mildly stimulating ; it should aim at being regenerative. It should not merely offer outward opportunities,

but should breathe a quickening spirit. The youth who comes here should feel not merely the wealth of valuable material, but the invigoration of a pure atmosphere. The young are generous, and are receptive of ideal impulses. They are chilled by being treated in a merely business-like way. When they might answer to the attraction of a nobler life, they are repelled by the more sordid inducements of immediate success. They have been taught before they came here that industry is sure to meet with rewards; and it often happens that a University career puts no loftier motive before a young man's mind. We know well enough what practically happens. Some accept the issue with good courage, and work that they may win their reward. Others are left comparatively unaffected by the higher intellectual activity of the place, but win from their surroundings, their society, and their pleasant pursuits, some measure of self-consciousness which serves for culture. The influences are clear which direct character and make it available for some future work. The influences are not so obvious which form character and give it new contents. Yet surely these are what a University ought specially to aim at supplying.

Perhaps the conception of character is difficult to define, and does not enter readily into our categories of life. We allow for wealth, position, intellect, natural endowments, uprightness, common sense, practical ability, and the like; and perhaps we generally assume that character is the sum total of all these good qualities. But character means more than this. After we have summed up a man's qualities, so far as they can be determined by analysis, there remains the individual energy which directs them, which determines the end to which they shall work, and decides the method of their application. There is in every man a permanent

background of self, with reference to which his separate actions are interpreted. There is something in his manner of putting things, which is more or less powerful than the abstract truth of the things he says. There is a sense of personality behind the separate actions ; a half-felt consciousness of a connected aim in detached and, it may be, wayward utterances ; a certain suggestiveness of motive, which it may be hard to exactly comprehend or define. Behind the speaker, somehow or other, we seek the man, and are not comfortable until we think that we have found him. And it is this personality that I would define as character.

If we ask, further, on what this character rests, it is, perhaps, possible to point out a few of its chief elements. It depends upon the possession of an ideal which is capable of application to problems as they arise. Both parts of this definition seem necessary. We do not feel confidence in an idealist, whose ideas float in a vague and unrealized world, and who has no definite point of attachment between them and the actual problem to be solved. In the same way, we submit, it is true, but we submit unwillingly, to the guidance of the man of practical common sense, who takes things as they come, and contents himself with finding a way out for the present, but marks no track for the future. The man of character is he who, by a word or hint, establishes an unlooked-for relationship between our immediate self and something that we may conceivably become, between the stress of present circumstances and a far-off, but not impossible, haven. His influence upon us is often rather felt than expressed. It rests upon a consciousness that he has himself traversed to some extent the road which he suggests to others ; that he pursues a definite course ; that he has an end in view ; that he recognizes unexpected capacities in

human nature, and has a grasp of principles which can organize and bring order into human affairs. We feel that he is strong; that he not only possesses an ideal, but has energy and force to pursue it; and that he is prepared at any moment to make a sacrifice of the outward accompaniments of life that he may preserve his allegiance to that ideal purpose which is the central point of his being.

Such exhibitions of character are, fortunately, not rare. Such men stand out as resting-places, as refuges amid the shifting sands of ordinary life. Let me recall to you some that are doubtless familiar enough.

The scholar, with a devotion to learning, pursuing some special branch of knowledge with untiring energy, and full of respect for every other effort that is made to increase man's hold over the outward world, or over the inward world of thought,—whose life is spent in grappling with the multiplicity of phenomena and restoring order by tracing the workings of higher law—how powerful he is for good. He gives by his mere existence a sense of security and repose. His words may be few, his utterances cautious, his manner reserved; but all feel stronger and better from the dignified presence and the calm look of one who has set himself deliberately

“To follow knowledge, like a falling star,  
Beyond the farthest verge of human thought.”

His life breathes the charm of self-sacrifice. He has not cared to carry his talents into the world's market. He has not sought the world's rewards. He does not seek for fame; he is superior to that “last infirmity of noble minds.” He is more anxious to know, than that others should know that he knows. Utterance is wrung from him almost against his will. His heart is in his work; and behind the man stands

the appealing form of that knowledge to which his life is devoted. He is powerful with a power not his own.

Again, we feel the influence of the man who is animated by a high sense of duty; who sweeps away the cobwebs of wilfulness, and sets forth the supreme law of right; and whose clear vision is not blurred by the mists of passion or prejudice. Our hearts make answer to the firmness and resoluteness of one who recalls us from smoother paths, and causes the timely mandate of conscience to sound in our ears. Such there are in every society. The undergraduate of no great intellectual power it may be, whose nature is sane and strong; who quietly sets his face against foolish talking and unseemly jesting; whose look is a reproof to any who in his presence speaks lightly of breaches of the moral law; who is pleasant and genial without being frivolous; who curbs the folly that comes of thoughtlessness, and maintains the supremacy of purity—many such are to be found; and on them the sweetness of our common life depends.

Again, there are those of larger sympathies and of more practical temper, who are inspired with a desire to affect the world around them. These are they who bring their knowledge and their moral strength directly to the service of society; who labour at the problems of social organization; who are attracted by politics; who have schemes of progress, wrought out by human effort, skilfully guided to definite objects. We recognize with thankfulness the great growth and extension of this spirit in late years as an integral part of University life. We are glad to feel the thrill of enthusiasm for humanity; we are ready to take our share in trying experiments; we rejoice that demands are made upon us to do our part in the furtherance of human welfare. We feel



the strength of one who is engaged in the investigation of large social problems. We respond to the enthusiasm that is not discouraged by difficulties, but finds full scope for energy in some unobtrusive work whereby the lives of his fellow-men may be made brighter and their aims higher and nobler. He possesses an ideal : he moves us by his force of character.

I need not multiply instances. We see in all these cases common features : we can recognize the common qualities which give them power. But as we see them in actual life, and as we meditate upon them, it is impossible to avoid a recognition of their limitations. The life of the pure scholar is carefully hedged round and guarded ; and its boundaries tend to grow narrower and narrower. The pursuit of special knowledge seems to become more and more absorbing ; sometimes there grows up in the student's mind an unworthy impatience of all other branches of knowledge than his own. He loses pleasure in the society of his fellows, or does not feel equal to the strain which this involves. He cannot readily turn his mind out of the groove of his customary work. The channel becomes narrower and deeper. The permanently human side of life sinks into the background or gradually disappears. The stern form of positive knowledge drives away all possible rivals. The ornaments which imagination casts over life are ruthlessly stripped away. Art in all its forms disappears. Sympathy grows cold, or the language for its expression is lost. New generations arise for whom the student has no fresh message, no articulate answer to new questionings. He is not supercilious, but he has lost his versatility by the bondage of inveterate habit. Prematurely old in mind, he remains a monument of the past while his mind is still at its greatest vigour.

So, too, with the man of high moral principle. At the outset he is vigorous and inspiring. Success forces him into prominence and position. The world wants men who will resolutely uphold the right, and who can be trusted to be upright and conscientious. A man rises to the greatness of the trust reposed in him. He is resolved that his motive shall be always apparent. He becomes an excellent official, unsparing of self, and therefore unsparing of others. But habit lays its benumbing hand rapidly upon his energies. He ceases to be so much "a light to guide" as "a rod to check the erring and reprove." It is difficult for him not to feel contempt for the human weakness which he has mastered. Morality, by itself, always tends towards stoicism. Its practice becomes harder and more rigorous. How often do we gaze sadly on one whom we profoundly respect, but who will not allow us to love him ! In the punctilious discharge of daily duties he is admirable ; but when they are done, he wishes to be left to himself that he may prepare for the struggle of the morrow. How far removed is this from the first promise of his beginning, from the ideal with which he set out :

" Serene will be our days and bright,  
And happy will our nature be,  
When love is an unerring light  
And joy its own security."

The same danger besets him who engages in humanitarian effort. Indeed, in that sphere the danger is greater, because the steps are more numerous between the ideal end and the practical measures that can be taken. Activity tends to become an object in itself. I need not point out—history and experience alike repeat the warning—how easily patriotism confounds itself with party ; how the desire to serve

mankind passes into a struggle for personal power ; how the confidence of the possession of a panacea for human ills is the parent of intolerance and oppression. No man has ever risen above the temptation offered by the opportunity of having the power to enforce his own ideal of society. This is why history tends so little to personal edification, why the great men of the world rarely attract our admiration when we know them well. But in the sphere of our own experience are we not sometimes conscious of the insincerity of the average politician, of the hardness of the average philanthropist? There is a glibness in repeating formulæ ; a metallic capacity for devising plans ; a ready answer to all objections ; an unconquerable belief in the efficacy of machinery. But we feel that the tide of life will be but little affected by the dams which they are laboriously raising. We recognize, as we meditate on their efforts, something of the mystery of the world. If human nature were so malleable as they suppose, the world might be a more comfortable place ; it might be freed from some of its pains and woes : but it would be a much smaller thing ; and human nature would be robbed of its dignity.

There is, then, another question about character—its power of escaping narrow limitations. It is not enough that its primary ideal should be true and noble. Besides this, character must be possessed of a large outlook upon life. Without this the very self-devotion which the ideal inspires, the specialization of functions which it demands, involves a loss of human sympathies, an exclusive pursuit of definite objects, a care for measurable results. If we would make the best of ourselves and of our life we must make provision for a large outlook.

Now, it is just this outlook which religion, and religion

alone, supplies. It accepts the individual with his gifts and his capacities, and opens out on every side of him windows through which he may look out on an ever-widening life ; it establishes clear and intelligible relationships between himself and every aspect of the world in which he lives ; it sets his feet in a large room which grows daily larger. Culture begins with a great promise of hold upon the world. Character is founded upon the power "to see life steadfastly and see it whole." But the hold which culture gives tends to grow smaller as it grows firmer : we grasp what we have seized, but all the rest tends to fade away. The field of vision which character covers grows narrower as the eye is more intently strained. Religion alone makes the promise of culture perennial, and gives to force of character an unending scope. Religion is the one reconciler of human activities, the one vivifying power of life, the one preservative against shortsightedness and narrowness of range. For he whose life "is hid with Christ in God" lives into an ever-widening circle of spiritual experiences, catches fresh glimpses of the meaning of the universe, a meaning which he is oft-times unable to express in words, but which animates his acts and breathes through his purposes, which gives him thoughts beyond his thoughts, and power beyond his power.

I have chosen to put these considerations before you, because I think they have a bearing on some vital questions which perplex young minds, aye, and old minds too, here, as I know. The period of a young man's University career is the period of his intellectual emancipation. Let me sketch one form of this process, which I think you will recognize as not uncommon. Mental growth began with the training of home, and the child absorbed unconsciously the habits and traditions around him. At school the same

sort of habits and traditions were converted into a rigid discipline, which it was only possible to escape by dishonourable means. The boy may have inwardly rebelled, but he was driven to outward compliance ; and he rarely questioned the principles on which the discipline was founded. At the University the youth felt at once the relaxation of discipline, except within trifling bounds. On the whole, he became master of his own time, judge of his own industry, responsible to himself alone. The fuller his life becomes, the more unreservedly he lends himself to the new influences by which he is surrounded—the more rapidly does he drift away from the checks and regularities of the past. If his mind works actively, if he catches some of the enthusiasm for knowledge, if he consciously enters into a larger world and frames for himself an object of endeavour, he wakens to a new sense of self and its importance. The purer his nature, the simpler his life, the loftier his effort—the more speedily he ceases to feel the need of outward restraint. The old principles have sunk into him, and have done their work ; he is above the temptation to grosser sins ; he has a high sense of duty ; he enjoys life and the full realization of his manifold activities. He does not challenge his old beliefs, he does not abandon his old practices ; but they become mechanical, and do not directly contribute to the maintenance of his inward being. Life is easy and straightforward ; there are no perplexities which cannot be solved by some one or other of the many new explanations which he finds floating in the intellectual atmosphere around him. The quick intelligence is attracted by new points of view, and readily and rapidly changes its mental equipment. It is not that he doubts about religion, but religion ceases to be of vital importance in his eyes. He is led to think

that he can do very well without it. He has found out that many excellent men, many distinguished men whose career he hopes to follow, and whose achievements he hopes to rival, have laid it aside. He sees that their moral uprightness has not suffered, nor their industry diminished in consequence. At first he has heart-searchings; but he is convinced of the absolute necessity of straightforwardness in the first place. He has an ingenuous sense of shame at professing what he does not really feel. His Communion ceases; his attendance at chapel is reduced to the lowest terms; his prayers die away. He passes through no great crisis; he is conscious of no new temptations; his sense of duty is not relaxed. He succeeds in his object of endeavours. He settles down to some useful occupation. He is an excellent man; what more can be required of him? What has he lost by abandoning his faith? He is a more capable member of society than many who make great profession of religion.

I believe that this process which I have described is more common than is supposed. When men undertake to define their position, they naturally begin from intellectual doubts and difficulties; but it has seemed to me in most cases that this is not a true description of their actual development. They slipped gradually out of any sense of the need of religion for their individual lives. They found that they could do without it, and were not conscious of any particular loss. It is a practical position, and demands a practical answer. I have tried to lead up to such an answer, to show that the man, who in the name of culture and intellectual freedom lets go his faith in God, has really hopelessly failed from his own point of view. He has made it impossible that he should get out of life nearly all



that there is in it. "The world through its wisdom knew not God" is true of all times. Man through his desire for symmetry and order, through his longing to realize his own powers in a field carefully selected by himself, is constantly constructing for himself a smaller world than the actual world. He narrows life to suit the convenience of his own definitions. He narrows his own character, and hardens into another, and less noble form, of fanaticism than that which he began by denouncing.

Now, in reference to this subject there are one or two considerations concerning religion which it is worth while to bring before a young man's attention. It is a result of the certainty of his early training that he expects to find a convincingness about religious truth which he does not demand from other truth. He admits at once that it is in his power to abandon the pursuit of knowledge and waste his time in idleness. He does not admit so readily that it is in his own power to abandon the practice of religion in just the same way. I know that God's Spirit nestles in the heart that once has cherished it, and does not withdraw save by repeated rebuffs. But the process of neglect and inattention which I have described is gradual, and is more fatal than a definite fall into sin, with its conviction by conscience and consequent revulsion of feeling. No, it is easy enough to forget God, and shut Him out of the world in which you elect to dwell.

Again, it is well that religion should not be reduced too much to a matter of mere common sense and good conduct. Young men should be led to know that it is concerned, not with the natural life, but with the spiritual life. A man may cultivate and discipline and employ his natural powers with admirable care, and may bring forth natural fruits of rare excellence. Let us give him all credit and fully admit the



merit of the result produced, as measured by its own standard. This does not affect the truth that an impassable gulf is fixed between the natural man at his best and the spiritual man at his worst. The one is struggling into a higher scale of being, the other is resting contentedly on a lower scale.

Again I am brought back to the point from which I started. Christianity can appeal to the fair-minded and serious inquirer, on the ground that it affords the only permanent basis for the formation of a strong and steadily progressive character. The more steadfastly we look at life and its problems, the more clearly do we see the manifold temptations to secure immediate success by adopting limitations which mar, while they seem to make. The Christian revelation can appeal confidently to the most cultivated intellect on the ground that it corresponds with the largest aspect of actual life. It is quite possible to create for one's self a world of one's own choosing, smaller than God's world, and explicable without the need of His presence. This smaller world may be excellent in its own way ; but it grows narrower as life goes on, and the individual dwindles, as that on which he nourishes himself diminishes. God's world grows daily larger and larger before the attentive eye, till it broadens into the vastness of eternity. The individual is ever losing his scanty life to find a larger one, and new relationships are perpetually coming into view. His progress is endless, but its course is definite ; for he grows into closer communion with a Person, very God and very man, and is clothed upon with a personality not his own. "That I may know Christ, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death" is a real aspiration which has power to extend

infinitely the meaning of life. Sad words these, it may be said; growth it may be, but growth through gloom and sorrow. Did St. Paul find it so? Have you ever come across the record of a more joyous and more resolute soul than is revealed in his writings? And how, in general terms, are we to explain in modern language the broad features of St. Paul's attitude towards life? Surely it was a sense of continual progress, of constant effort, of repeated renewal, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on towards the goal, unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He frankly took life as it came, and transformed it into a series of splendid opportunities, in each of which he could live and learn, from each of which he could emerge with a larger nature, prepared for fresh adventures, endowed with new strength.

"Then welcome each rebuff  
That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go!  
Be our joys three parts pain;  
Strive, and hold cheap the strain,  
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe."

It is the secret of human heroism, which then only is established securely when it is not the far-off echo of a maxim, but the reality of a struggle of the human soul to reach the Person who is the object of its love.

"The knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." This is the element which gives force to the Christian character, and gives a power, an efficiency, beyond the attainment of the highest culture, the noblest development of the natural man. And it does so because it opens out infinite possibilities, because it delivers from those limitations which

gather round the soul and impede its progress. We notice clearly enough the difference between men's capacities ; it is more difficult to observe the still more important difference between the worlds in which they elect to live. Yet it is in the choice, I might almost say the creation, of its world that the soul's success or failure is made manifest.

This is the positive side of the Christian life : this is the secret of the Christian character. There is a tendency, especially in youth, to notice first of all the negative side of the Christian life, its discipline, its abstinences, its formation of habits. It seems to be concerned with the imposition of limitations upon the freedom and frankness of natural impulses. But habit, in its true sense, means the garnering of past experience as a starting-point for future progress. Discipline means the training of self into ready obedience, that so the current business of daily life may be transacted without needless wear and tear, and time may be more abundant for new and fruitful work.

“ They that in play can do the thing they would,  
Having an instinct throned in reason's place—  
These are the best.”

The training of the Christian life is not an end in itself, but a means. It liberates the faculties from small perplexities. It carries the man easily and steadily through the ordinary questions which beset his daily course. It leaves him with energies unimpaired for fresh conquests and further progress.

And that progress is a progress in knowledge, “ The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” The force of the Christian character depends upon the sincerity, the clearness, the fulness of its manifestation of God's Spirit working in the heart the knowledge and love of

Jesus. The help that the Christian can give to his fellows can never go further than the call, "Come and see what the Lord has done for my soul." The message of the Church to the world cannot be founded on any stronger basis. What the world needs to feel is the largeness of the Christian outlook, the strength of Christian hope, the completeness of the Christian answer to all life's problems. To the Church is entrusted knowledge, "the knowledge of Christ Jesus," knowledge which men are free to accept or reject ; but we must be prepared to show that he who rejects it maims and cripples his life, here and now, visibly and manifestly. Great is the dignity of man ; great are the powers of mind and soul entrusted to him ; splendid are the triumphs which he can win over self and over the world. I would not underestimate the power of intellectual and moral forces exercised without the aid of religion. But the world's gross lamps cannot rival heaven's white light. Great is the dignity of man ; greater still the dignity of the Christian ; aye, of the simple soul to whom it is not given to know much or speak much, or strive to move the world, yet who bears the marks and tokens of the Spirit's power, and is clothed with a marvellous grace which passes beyond what is visible.

" Everywhere

I see in the world the intellect of man,  
That sword—the energy his subtle spear ;  
The knowledge which defends him like a shield—  
Everywhere ; but they make not up, I think,  
The marvel of a soul like thine, earth's flower."

The Christian life is oftentimes called upon nowadays to show its potency, to demonstrate its capacity for doing the work which the world wishes to have done. In a University, above other places, that question ought to receive a ready

answer. "The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" should be set forth as powerful to mould character, as mighty in operation, as a mainspring of beneficent energy, as a preservative against narrowness and imperfect sympathy. "Ye are the salt of the earth." It is a vast responsibility ; it is also an eternal truth.

THE CLAIMS OF JESUS.





# THE CLAIMS OF JESUS.

*(Preached before the University of Oxford.)*

“Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?”—MATTHEW v. 13.

THE Sermon on the Mount is frequently quoted and referred to as containing the essence of the teaching of Jesus. It is regarded as a compendium of the message of the Galilean Prophet to the world, a summary of the lofty morality which He strove to inculcate on an untoward generation. It is spoken of as something which exists, an imperishable memorial of a thirst after righteousness—exists apart from dogmas and creeds and churches, because it appeals directly to the heart, the conscience, the experience of mankind. So simple, it is said, and so direct; absorbing and spiritualizing so much of previous thought and aspiration; giving an ultimate form to all that was best and noblest in the consciousness of mankind.

So some say, some who call themselves members of no Church, and look upon the Creed of Christendom as outworn in its form, though beautiful in its contents, who strive to penetrate through the husk of traditional belief, and reach the kernel of eternal truth, who seek the maxims of morality clothed in penetrating and commanding expression.

Such minds find the Sermon on the Mount easy and intelligible, an utterance which he who will can at once appropriate.

On the other hand, it is somewhat remarkable that Christians, in proportion to their advance in holiness, seem to almost shrink and quail before the awful grandeur of these words of their Master. They hesitate to affirm in their individual case that they find the standard there set up to be even approximately within their reach. "Is this," they ask, "to be the rule of my life, or is it a collection of counsels of perfection? Does it apply to this world in which I live, or is it a glimpse of the perfect order of the world to come?" The devout Christian stands abashed, the more so the more he ponders. I imagine that fewer sermons are preached on texts taken from the Sermon on the Mount than from any passage of corresponding importance in the New Testament, simply from sheer inability on the part of the preacher to face the tremendous issues which it seems to him to raise.

How comes this curious difference between two classes of equally earnest minds? The answer opens up much that is suggestive. The non-Christian moralist seeks for sustainment for himself, and takes what he can find from every source. The quickening of his emotions, the heightening of his aspirations, the confirmation of his hope in the capacities of the human heart for cherishing the love of goodness,—these are feelings necessary for his life. The words of the wise and the good are welcome to him. He needs esthetic solace and literary satisfaction. He turns to the contemplation of things lovely, and takes comfort from them. It is not intellectual truth which he is seeking, but a profounder emotion. He is subject to no master, but

is master of himself. His thoughts, his beliefs, his view of life, are his own, framed for himself by experience and reflection on all that has gone before. His system is his own; but other systems can shed on his path the gleam of their beauty.

The Christian can assume no such exalted position. He goes humbly and submissively in quest of truth. He bows his head before a Teacher who cannot err. He disposes his heart to listen to the Teacher's Voice: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Nay, he knows that of himself he cannot understand: he must first ask for the aid of God's Spirit, for he holds "that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them because they are spiritually judged." With trembling hand and downcast mien he opens the message of his God. He is not free to choose for himself; the statutes and judgments are there for him to understand and obey.

It is not, then, a ground of wonder that the two classes of readers do not agree about the import of what they read, for they bring with them different conceptions of its application to themselves. The difference, it may be said, is natural, and each view is legitimate. But is that really so? Is the man who reads the Sermon on the Mount as though it were a dialogue of Plato—is he really making fair use of that document? Is his standard of literary criticism fairly applied to the actual meaning of the words before him? It is, I think, worth while to consider if the Sermon on the Mount can be read as merely a piece of lofty moral teaching, if its substance has any meaning apart from the Divine claims of its Author.

It is true that it sets forth, what philosophers had set

forth before, the beauty of self-renunciation, and the rewards which follow upon it. It is true that it turns man away from the world, and back upon himself, that he may be free from false allurements, and may know how to possess his soul in quietness and confidence. It is true that it absorbs and amplifies all the noblest precepts of morality which man has yet discovered for the guidance and purification of his life. But all these things are subsidiary to another purpose; they are all introduced by the way. The primary object of the discourse is to proclaim a new kingdom—the kingdom of heaven—something which cannot be tested by moral standards, and does not appeal to moral motives, something which is an object in itself. The Beatitudes are an enunciation of the conditions of citizenship in that kingdom; they describe the sort of men who shall enrol themselves as its members, and they specify an ascending scale of qualities, through which the citizen, once admitted, is to ascend to the full enjoyment and exercise of his franchise. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Through the narrow gate of humility, the would-be citizen enters into the outskirts of the kingdom; then, by the exercise of a series of virtues which are grafted on the root of humility, he develops his own character in his relations to God and man—till at the last, the innermost gates of the kingdom stand open before him. “Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Because he has pursued righteousness through suffering, therefore he passes into full possession of his civic rights.

It is to the citizens thus defined that the rest of the discourse is addressed. It lays down the moral and

ceremonial law of the kingdom, and the conditions of the service of God and man in it. But throughout all that follows the primary requisites of character are assumed to exist; it is their growth, development, and application which are traced. The kingdom itself depends upon its King, who is the one Judge of His subjects. Apart from Him the kingdom has no existence; He creates it, explains it, rules it, and will judge it. And this King, this Ruler, this Judge, strange to say, is the Speaker Himself, who, wearing the guise of a peasant of Galilee, claims for Himself an eternal being, an eternal righteousness, omniscience, and supreme spiritual power. "Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Thy Name?' And then will I profess to them, 'I never knew you.'"

All this may be hard to admit, but it is still harder to explain away. Intellectually, those who would keep the morality of Jesus, and discard the Person of Christ, have greater difficulties to face in dealing with the records of Christ's life and teaching than have the orthodox Christians. The kingdom of heaven cannot easily be turned into the kingdom of earth. It does not profess to deal with the development of human society according to the best ideas of human progress. The moral teaching of Christ, in its simplest forms, cannot be detached from the Person of the Teacher, from His claims to everlasting power and Godhead. The influence that Christianity has exercised in the world has been due to the belief of Christians that their Lord was dwelling among them, that they were the instruments of His designs, and the recipients of His grace. The difficulties seem to be insuperable in the way of turning Christianity into a sublime system of spiritual morality.

At every step an apology is necessary, and so much has to be explained away that little remains.

I could understand an appeal made to my intelligence to found my life upon the precepts of Socrates, as handed down by Xenophon and Plato. I could see that he was a man who lived under conditions exceptionally adapted to enable him to "see life stedfastly, and see it whole." I could admit that he had rare opportunities of mastering the main problems of man's life, individual, social, and political. I could appreciate his insight, his experience, his practical wisdom and shrewdness. His personality, his circumstances, his choice of death in a ripe old age rather than swerve from his principles,—all this would predispose me to accept his guidance, and weigh well his results. But it is far otherwise with Jesus viewed as a moral teacher. I am to regard as endowed with a supreme moral instinct a Galilean peasant, who died at the age of thirty-three, who had no experience of the rush of civilized life, who had no intellectual training, no intelligible qualification for being my guide. When to this it is added that He spoke in such a manner of Himself that the credulous folk amongst whom He lived, filled with superstitious notions of a mythopœic age, took Him for God, and in their bewilderment at His violent and untimely death, imagined that He rose from the dead, and then imagined that they saw Him ascend into heaven—when I am asked to divest His teaching of the accretions which these beliefs caused to cluster round it in the very earliest records in which it is contained—I think that, as a plain man, I should feel myself somewhat bewildered. "What!" I should say, "is not morality concerned with life? Are not the facts of life before us all, and cannot you give me a clear interpretation of them made

by some one who does not need so much explaining away?"

It is not worth while to pursue this aspect of the matter further, for I am not seeking to construct a logical dilemma. My object only is to show that the process of eliminating the supernatural from Christianity, and taking the moral elements which remain, is not so easy as it is assumed to be. It is possible, no doubt, and profitable as well, to one who is merely seeking a basis for the individual life. One who had ceased to believe in Christianity expressed in conversation his high appreciation of it, and his entire goodwill towards it. "It is a beautiful thing," he said, "and I could not do without it. There are times when it suits my moods, and I like to know that churches are open and services are going on which I can attend when I feel inclined. I like at times to have a fragrance shed over my life."

Now, this literary and artistic attitude towards life and its problems is not uncommon at the present day; but it is obvious that it is purely individual, and takes no account of human society or of human nature as a whole. I am afraid that it shows an inadequate sense of responsibility; and it certainly does not rest upon any overflowing desire for truth, or, indeed, on any strong intellectual basis whatever. It shelters itself behind an admiration of Christian morality, because it lacks the robustness to accept an ethical system which is frankly founded on materialism.

I would ask you to consider if what is called the pure and simple morality of the Sermon on the Mount is so simple, after all. A King proclaims a new kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, of which He is the Law-giver now, of which He will be the Ruler so long as time shall endure,



and of which at the last He will be the unerring Judge. His life upon earth had not yet been lived to the end : its full purpose had not yet been unfolded. But in the Sermon on the Mount itself, we have set forth the need of a belief in " Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, and from thence shall come to judge the quick and the dead." Take this away and nothing coherent is left. It is not a question of eliminating an accretion of supernatural or miraculous elements ; they are of the very essence of the matter. Jesus did not set before men a different kind of life from that which they had tried to live before, but He set forth a new end of life, and a new motive for action ; and the end and the motive alike were Himself.

But, further, if we turn to a serious attempt to understand the moral ideas set forth in the Sermon on the Mount, the Christian is beset by the same difficulty of understanding why the non-Christian professes to admire it. " The poor in spirit ; they that mourn ; the meek ; they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake "—these express qualities which it requires all the Christian's belief in a living Jesus to enable him to aspire to. He admits the truth of the reproach that the Christian Society has not by any means always aimed at these virtues ; he confesses in his own heart that he himself finds them easier to pronounce than to understand. But if the Church has not attained to them, the world does not seek after them at all. If a Christian does not always possess them, the moralist who aims at dealing with actual society cannot in his system put them in the first place—less, probably, in the present day than ever. For an Englishman rejoices in the sense of his freedom, his independence, his capacity. Ours is the day



of the individual, the day in which active effort is possible for all, and passive resistance may be superseded as the resource of the feeble in times gone by. It does not seem to me that the moral system of the Sermon on the Mount is especially in accordance with the ideals of the present day, or harmonizes exceptionally with the spirit of the nineteenth century. If it is difficult to see how the ethics of Christianity are to be saved while their religious sanction is removed, it is no less difficult to see why it should be thought worth while to save them.

The Christian rests his life on faith, and it is the fashion to oppose faith to reason or science. But faith is not in Scripture opposed to reason, it is opposed to sight; and no man has a right to scoff at Christians for their credulity, unless he himself is sure that he believes only what he sees. Few thoughtful men, I suppose, would really claim that it was so with them. Some form or other of hypothesis is needed to frame together the results of observation, of experience, of experiment. Religion is concerned with the sum total of life; and the Christian is justified in asserting that his hypothesis is as reasonable, as intelligible, as simple, as much justified by experience, as any rival hypothesis which has yet been framed to cover the same ground. There is nothing irrational, nothing credulous, in holding that the Divine education of the human race received its full meaning in the union upon this earth of the Divine with the human nature; and it is upon this fundamental truth that the Creed of the Christian Church depends. The difficulties in the way of belief are now what they have always been. "Why," exclaimed St. Paul, "should it be judged incredible with you if God doth raise the dead?" To his mind the resurrection was the simplest explanation possible of the reality

of the spiritual world, of the dignity of human nature, of the meaning of human life. Despite the advance of human knowledge, despite the progress of human comfort, despite the development of human society, despite the increase of all the things that hide from the individual the sense of his individual responsibility, the Christian still sees in the resurrection of Jesus the most natural event in the history of man's spiritual progress.

It is frequently said that unbelief is making great strides among us. This is not my experience, looking back upon the past. It rather seems to me that owing to the development of human society on its own lines, all those motives have now disappeared which formerly induced a man to profess himself a Christian without being so with any depth of conviction. We have reached a time when there is not much inducement for any one to call himself a Christian, if he is not so really and even fervently.

It is well sometimes to remember that Holy Scripture nowhere sets before us the profession of Christianity as an easy matter; and we ought not to be misled by comparing our days with previous times, and sighing over the loss of an imaginary age of faith. If we turn to the Sermon on the Mount we find there the establishment of the kingdom of heaven, and the laws of that kingdom. The call into the kingdom is an individual call; the laws of the kingdom are binding on those who enrol themselves as citizens. We are not primarily concerned with those who are not citizens; "Narrow is the gate," we are told, "and straitened is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." When one who wished to know more asked the question, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" he received no satisfaction for his curiosity about others, but

was driven back upon himself: "Strive thou to enter in." Nay, the very basis of our dealings with others is summed up in the maxim "Judge not ;" and the Christian is bidden to clothe himself with humility, as a preliminary process, each time that he advances to the service of his fellows. The recognition of the beam in his own eye is necessary before he can be in the right attitude of mind to remove the mote out of his brother's eye.

It is well to keep these precepts in mind if we would answer the question—What is to be the Christian attitude towards the non-Christian, or towards those who would rob Christianity of its Divine sanction and reduce it to a beautiful poem? Very many such there are, possessed of the highest sense of duty, living noble lives of devoted service to the best interests of man's temporal life. It is our duty, our clear and obvious duty, to love and respect and honour them, if the conditions of our life have brought us into communion with them. The Christian hope is too deep in the heart of the believer for him not to recognize gladly all human virtue, and to sympathize with every manly effort after what is noble and what is good. He is ready to learn from every side anything that may make himself more large-hearted, more sympathetic, more intelligent of the movement of the world in which he lives. The thoughts, the questionings, the problems, the knowledge, the unrest, the discontent of his own age—he does not turn to his Christianity that it may free him from these things ; but that it may help him to cope with them for himself, and for others, so far as he is strengthened so to do.

But he has no warrant in the words of his Master for thinking that the maintenance of Christianity in the world will ever be a perfectly easy matter. He has no real ground

for repining or being disconcerted because all good men do not agree with him, either about the reality of a spiritual life, or the necessity of founding it on the revelation of Jesus as the Christ. The reality of a spiritual life is always contrary to the natural man. It is not a conception which once introduced into the world is sure to take root, and prevail of itself. To each generation that truth has to be taught; and in a time when the promotion of material interests is the chief object of pursuit, many men think that they can do as well without that truth at all. Each man has to win for himself a conviction of the reality of the spiritual life; and he has to pursue it with care and toil, with constant self-discipline, until his natural self be subjected to the higher law of his spiritual being. The pursuit is no more popular than is the pursuit of the highest knowledge, or the cultivation of the finest taste; yet men sometimes exclaim, "Christianity is a failure, because it does not attract the masses." They do not stop to consider that lectures on science, however carefully popularized, do not attract the masses any more. Surely Christianity succeeds as well as any system that has yet been devised for raising men above the things of sense, and putting them in possession of a higher world than that which is bounded by their own material interests.

Again, many of those who believe entirely in a spiritual world, and who hold fast to a communion with God, do not find this communion through the sanctification of their nature by the incarnation and atonement of Jesus. His life, they say, was beautiful; His words were true; His life and His words brought men nearer to God, as do all things beautifully expressed, and supremely true, but in no other way,

Now, against them the Christian position has to be made good, not so much by argument as by steadfastness, and by the example of a consistent life which draws its power from the Spirit of Jesus. Let us go back to the Sermon on the Mount, and learn there our relations to the world. We are concerned with human progress by promoting the spread of the kingdom of heaven, and we can only do so by showing that that kingdom is real; that we are not only the followers of a Teacher who left us many beautiful maxims for the purification of character and the ennobling of life, but are the subjects of a living King, whose laws have a binding obligation, whose power is real, and who gives of His power to those who seek it. He has laid upon us an awful weight of responsibility: "Ye are the light of the world, ye are the salt of the earth." It is a responsibility from which the primary obligation of Christian humility would lead us to shrink. It is a responsibility which we do not care to speak about; yet it is a responsibility which we have to face, and in facing which the Christian recognizes his true strength. For he sees that the functions of the Church of Christ in the world—the duties of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven to his brethren, the citizens of the kingdom of earth—have always been, and still continue to be, the twofold obligation of bearing testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus, and so of preserving human society from that corruption to which of themselves all things merely human are inevitably exposed. Amid the clang of conflicting opinions, and the hubbub of those who trumpet forth their discoveries for the alteration of human nature and the reorganization of human society, he turns to his Lord and says—

“Our little systems have their day,  
They have their day and cease to be,  
They are but broken lights of Thee,  
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.”

Yes, they are not darkness—let us not say that—they are but broken lights; and it is for us to tend and keep alive the reflection of that One True Light which was sent to enlighten every one that cometh into the world.

“Ye are the salt of the earth.” In rude days now gone by men felt that; and even now, when men are disquieted, they turn mutely and unconsciously to the Church of Christ. If they break out into reproaches against our unworthiness we can but sadly confess that their reproaches are deserved. The salt may never quite have lost its savour; but who would say that the savour had been as strong as it ought to have been? In former days men knew that they were not leading Christian lives. They knew that the world was too strong for them. They built monasteries, and endowed holy men to help them by their prayers. They looked forward to end a life of warfare, or political intrigue, in a monastic cell. They thought that they could lay up in definite places a store of salt for the preservation of the world. We all know how soon the salt lost its savour when it was removed from the actual corruption which it was meant to cure. Nowadays the Church and the world meet and mingle, and both are better for it. The savour of the spirit of Jesus finds its way imperceptibly into unexpected corners. The world is penetrated by it more than it knows or we can explain.

One who stands upon the shore in stormy weather looks at first with terror upon some huge billow that rears its mighty head, and dashes forward with irresistible force.



A moment and it has broken, and only the floating wreckage of its foam is hurled at his feet. He is alarmed, if the scene is new to him; but a little thought reminds him that the advance of the ocean's waters, its gain upon the coast-line, is wrought by the steady movement of the weight of water, of which the threatening billows are merely the signs and symbols. They are impressive to the mind of the spectator, through their power to work immediate ruin to anything which is drawn into the sphere of their influence. So is it with human thought and human progress. We are fascinated by the appearance of great upheavals; we picture the onward movement of the world as being by leaps and bounds; we flatter ourselves that we understand the spirit of the age, and can foretell the future progress of the ages. History is a record of storms. We note the raging billows; we have little to say of the quiet, peaceful days when the wavelets rippled gently to the shore. Yet the force lies always in the mass of the waters; it is their regular and orderly ebb and flow which effects that gradual detrition on which the ocean's advance depends. The waves of fashionable opinion ebb and flow; their breakers cause transient emotions in the bystanders. The simple and the novice think from time to time that all is lost, and that the old landmarks are for ever swept away; those whose experience is greater tremble indeed at the storm, and are awestricken at its destructive power, but they know that, though the waves rage highly and are mighty, there is One who dwelleth on high and is mightier—One who for a time dwelt on this earth, and was an object of derision to the fashionable opinions and the prevalent modes of thought of those amongst whom He moved. Yet He left behind Him truths which since His day have been the motive-power of



the world's progress ; and He founded a kingdom which, despite many shortcomings, has upheld the highest standard of human endeavour. The growth of that kingdom is a slow and gradual process of extension. Men in their impatience expect that it should become at once universal ; that its advance should meet with no checks. They have no such promise from their King, who taught them to find comfort not in outward recognition or outward success, but in an inward consciousness of the greatness of their mission, and the corresponding greatness of their individual responsibility. " Ye are the salt of the earth ; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be savoured ? " Let us deepen in our own minds the sense of the importance of our duties as members of Christ's Church, of the eternal value of the testimony borne by that Church, of the blessings which it bestows on men, whether they be willing to receive them or no ; let us keep before ourselves a humble sense of the duty of constant service to our brethren in the world.

CHRISTIANITY AND COMMON  
SENSE.



# CHRISTIANITY AND COMMON SENSE.

*(Preached before the University of Oxford.)*

“ Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip ? ”—JOHN xiv. 8, 9.

THE chief feature of the Four Gospels is the simple brevity with which their subject is set forth. They deal with nothing save with Jesus as He showed Himself, in a way that carried clear conviction to the writers, to be the Son of God. What were their grounds for this conviction is a question which may be discussed by those who will: the fact of the conviction is beyond dispute. The doings of Jesus are shortly told; the sayings of Jesus are recorded by men who own that when these sayings were uttered their meaning was often obscure to those who heard them. But a time came when the meaning of the sayings and doings of Jesus was plain and unmistakable. The claim of Jesus to be the Son of God was grasped as the central point of the new life which He came to give to His disciples. In the light of that fact all else became clear. The first preaching of the gospel consisted in setting forth “that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon,

and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life." The writers of the Gospels are full of their subject, and of their subject only. They do not care to speak about themselves, their own feelings, or impressions, or inferences. Jesus, very man and very God—this is what they have to declare. The power of the Gospel narratives lies in the exhibition of this truth as a fact—not an opinion, not a belief, but a fact once unintelligible, but now the simplest, though the most amazing, of facts—the one fact worthy of knowledge.

These considerations may serve to explain the scantiness of the mentions that are made in the Gospels of the companions of Jesus. Their names are given, but little else. No importance is attached to them personally or individually. It is enough that they saw the Lord, that they received His commission to make disciples of all the nations, that they were bidden to hand on to others what they themselves had seen and knew. It is of no consequence what manner of men they were when Jesus first came across their path. We are not told what motives drew them to Him; we cannot trace the progress of their inward growth under the influence of His teaching. These are questions which are of deep interest to modern speculation. But the reasons which make them interesting nowadays made them of no interest to the writers of the Gospel narratives. To them the one point of importance was the greatness of the fact made known to them, that Jesus was the Son of God. We, who are familiar with the truth itself, are concerned with the mode in which that truth may be presented to others. We wish to know how, at other times, it influenced life and character. We wish to analyze its special and inherent power. We talk of the religious instinct, or feeling, as one out of many influences which go to make the man. This

was not the view of the Evangelists. To them the fact, once grasped, was everything. To them the conception that God and man had been united in the Person of Jesus, opened up a new world, and gave a new life. There was no question of method or of degree. The believer in Jesus became, in virtue of that belief, a new creature. To him Jesus became at once the Way, the Truth, and the Life. There was no reason to explain the process, because there was no process to explain. The Gospels are the heroic epic of Christianity: all in them is large and serene and simple. The desire for analysis and introspection was left for a weaker and puny age.

Hence it comes that we know but little about the characters of the companions of Jesus. We reverence them because they were chosen by Him to be His witnesses; but we have little means of comparing their lives with ours, or drawing from their experiences anything that may help ourselves. They are almost as remote from our struggles as the chieftains of the heroic age are remote from the problems of modern warfare. They stand by themselves as examples of the thoroughness and sufficiency of the life in Christ. They stand unapproachable patterns of quiet strength, of unfailing joyousness, of large hopefulness, of perfect trust. They had no room for the doubts, the questionings, the despondencies, the sense of struggle, the feelings of sadness, which overpower the modern mind, and were inevitable so soon as the Church came into conscious antagonism with the society and speculations of the world.

Yet though this is the great lesson to be learned from reflection on the companions of Jesus, further curiosity about them is at least pardonable. We may collect the brief and fragmentary mentions of them which occur in the

Gospel narratives, and so construct some view of the chief characteristics of thought of those amongst them who have left no written records of themselves. In this attempt our criticism unconsciously follows the example set by pictorial art. It was natural for the painter to use the figures of the Twelve as types of different temperaments. It was natural that a belief in the universality of the Gospel message should lead to a pious wish to discover in the earliest disciples signs of varied characters and divergent impulses. It was natural to group round the Person of the Redeemer men of every sort, as Leonardo set the example in his picture of the Last Supper. Though it may be little else than a fancy, it is a fancy which embodies an eternal truth—that truth that Jesus draws all manner of men unto Him, and can satisfy the cravings of all manner of minds.

Without, however, unduly giving the reins to fancy, it may be admitted that the mentions made of St. Philip hang curiously together. When Jesus called him, Philip could at once give a reason for following Him: "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write." When Nathanael objected, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" he was ready with the plain and practical answer, "Come and see." When Jesus wished to feed the five thousand, it was Philip whom He proved by asking, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" And Philip at once showed his practical character by a careful calculation: "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." When the Greeks, who came up to the feast, were anxious to satisfy their curiosity by seeing the great Teacher, of whose fame they had heard, they were referred to Philip as the man who was most likely to make arrangements for



their convenience. They came to Philip and desired him, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Philip saw nothing unreasonable in their request, and told his Master of it.

All these passages taken together make on us the same impression. They show us Philip as a serious, reflective, reasonable, sensible man, of strong practical aims and great straightforwardness. He followed Jesus, because his quiet and sincere study of Moses and the prophets had prepared him for the coming of such an one. He recognized in Jesus the marks of the promised Saviour; and he was so satisfied with his own observation that he could emphatically advise his friend to come and see for himself. He followed Jesus because he recognized in Him tokens of a mission from on high. He was content to wait and watch to see what was the scope of that mission. He expected, like the rest, that the life of Jesus would lead up to some great act, which would be an overpowering manifestation of His authority. He looked for the conviction of outward proof, for some unmistakable revelation. He waited and waited, till at last he spoke out the thoughts that were in him. Even then he did not put them forward out of season. He took occasion of the words of Jesus, "If ye had known Me, ye would have known My Father also; from henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him." Then Philip broke in with the cry that declared the longing of his heart, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." "It sufficeth us." Philip had an ideal of inward satisfaction. His mind was restless and inquiring. He had been weighing and balancing from day to day. He had set before himself a final end of his deliberation. There was a point at which he would rest content. There was an evidence which would make his position unassailable: "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Philip had read of

the manifestation which Jehovah had made to Moses, when "the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the Name of the Lord." Philip was ready to recognize in Jesus one who had come to carry on the work of Moses, and bring a new revelation from on high. He longed that that revelation should be made clear and indisputable. He accepted the words of Jesus, the teaching of Jesus, in his own heart; but he wanted to have the outward sign, which should serve as an unmistakable warrant. He felt that the message of Jesus was more personal, more intimate than that of Moses. Moses alone had seen the glory of the Lord. Jesus knew God in a way that Moses did not know Him. Jesus needed not that the manifestation of God's glory should be made to Him for His own sake. But for the sake of others, Philip pleaded for a visible sign of the most convincing kind. "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

The answer of Jesus was not a refusal, but was a suggestive rebuke. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" Philip had not understood the difference between the revelation of the Lord, and the revelation of the Father. God, as the Lord, was made known by the thunders and lightnings and trumpet-blast of Sinai. God, as the Lord, spoke by the mouth of a human prophet, whom the vision of His glory might strengthen for the accomplishment of his high mission. God, as the Father, was made known by the human life of His Son, which was to carry home to the hearts of men the sense of their own share in that sonship. The revelation of Jesus was not a renewal of the former revelation of the "Lord of the whole earth," but was an extension of that revelation: "God with us." The request of Philip was not merely an unauthorized tempting of God, not merely a demand that

something should be done specially for his own individual satisfaction ; it involved a contradiction of all that Jesus had come to declare. The glory of the Lord, the power of the Lord, the majesty of the Lord,—these might be made known by the sign which Philip sought. But the love of the Father could not be made known by any awful or commanding vision. It had been made known already by the life of Jesus ; it was to be further manifested by His death. Jesus was preparing His disciples for His approaching departure, was summing up the meaning of all that He had done and said : “ From henceforth ye know the Father, and have seen Him.” Philip’s request showed that his mind was travelling along a mistaken road. He had failed to grasp the meaning which underlaid the whole message of Jesus. “ Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip ? ”

Philip was careful, thoughtful, fair-minded, observant, yet he had failed in largeness of view. The more impulsive Peter had been further sighted. He could say, “ Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that Thou art the Holy One of God.” Philip had carefully pieced together into a definite shape the result of his observations, but he lacked higher insight. He looked for something which was wanting to give him absolute certainty. He sought for a perfectly satisfactory proof—“ Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” He longed to be satisfied, and he set before himself a point where he could obtain that perfect satisfaction. His reason led him to pursue an entirely wrong method ; if he had consulted his feelings they would have given him a deeper insight into the real nature of his experience.

The character of Philip is one that always meets with

great respect in the world. All men think highly of one who has a calm and inquiring mind, a just and steadfast spirit, a practical and intelligible aim, one who knows where he is going, who understands what he wants, who patiently seeks to satisfy himself. Such a character, as we see in the case of Philip, leads a man diligently to seek after the truth, but does not by itself lead him to its discovery. We see this indicated by the irony of Jesus, when He turned to Philip to prove him by a question which set his practical mind to work out the details of a problem which he saw solved by means that never entered into his calculations. We hear the same reproof clearly stated in the words, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" The inquiring, straightforward, practical mind is excellent in its way, but has limits of its own creation which prevent it from discerning the deeper truths of man's spiritual life. It seeks its own individual satisfaction at some definite stage, not the progressive development of the higher nature. It takes self, at the period when self first becomes conscious, as the starting-point for a complete and perfect system. It tries to arrange the world, as the world then presents itself to the view. It supposes that the factors of the problem are all given, and that the introduction of order is all that is needed. It assumes that it has a command over its material. It demands that things should simplify themselves in accordance with the simplicity of its own definitions. In the name of common sense and reason it asks that the problem should be brought within sensible and reasonable limits. It ends by being more anxious to obtain a solution than to obtain a right solution. It gets on very well up to a certain point, and is ready with an answer to many questions; but something

remains, only one step more is necessary for complete satisfaction. But that one step is over an impassable gulf. It involves a demand which is an entire contradiction to the real truth. "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." The plain, practical, sober-minded man, whose reasoning is so clear and conclusive, who sweeps away so decidedly needless considerations, attracts our admiration at first sight. All is clear and simple ; what he asks is moderate and attainable ; the first steps in his process are excellent. But if we follow him, we find that he, too, is an idealist. He, too, pursues an end which cannot be reached. There is not much gain in the fact that his end is apparently reasonable, and is capable of expression in modest terms. Success is not necessarily nearer because the distance from the end is small. We may have pursued a straight course towards the mountain-top only to find ourselves hopelessly separated from it by a yawning abyss. Systems may increase in plausibility, without ever being able to take the step which severs what is plausible from what is true. Philip was plain and practical and thoughtful ; yet he had an end of his own which seemed to him so simple, but which was vast, impossible, unintelligent, hopelessly mistaken. The moment it was stated its visionary character was manifest. There was only one kindly answer possible. All Philip's pains had been thrown away ; all his meditations had been worthless. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?"

These considerations open up some reflections on a subject which is of some importance. There is always a desire to bring religion into connection with common sense, to treat it in a reasonable way, to prescribe for it a practical end, and to apply to a solution of its problems a clear and

rational method. This tendency is no doubt useful, and has done much, in England especially, to keep alive a sound and healthy religious life. But this tendency cannot without danger be accepted as sufficient by itself. It has its limits, and it is well to recognize those limits. The danger to which common sense is especially exposed is that of narrowing the problem to the dimensions of its own capacity for dealing with it. A sensible view of Christian doctrine is a good thing, provided that it be not obtained by dropping out of sight all that presents difficulties of interpretation or understanding. A sensible view of the duties of the Christian Church is very useful, provided it does not omit the chief duty of bearing witness to the truth as it is in Jesus. A sensible view of the work of the clergy is most instructive to them, provided it recognizes their chief function of striving to heighten the Christian consciousness. It is possible to make doctrine easy of acceptance by depriving it of all meaning. It is not difficult for an institution to gain a reputation for usefulness by undertaking to do what every one wants to see done. It is easy for an individual to gain a character for Christian zeal by exclusive devotion to the popular form of philanthropy. It is no doubt the duty of the Church of Christ to "make herself servant unto all, that she may gain the more" for her Master. There is no lack of suggestions how this may best be done. All such suggestions are valuable, and merit careful consideration. But they have limits which should be clearly admitted. Christianity is not a matter of common sense, but of the meaning of the words of Jesus. The first duty of the Church is to proclaim the message of Jesus in its fulness, in the words in which it was delivered. It cannot be altered to suit the changing requirements of every age. (There is always a



class of minds who are like Philip in their practical enlightenment. Sometimes a little more, sometimes a little less, and the Gospel of Christ would suffice them. There are sincere, serious, thoughtful souls, who claim to have thought things out for themselves. All fits together, and points clearly in one direction; the last remaining conclusion only needs to be clearly stated, and all would be well. The Christian system would then be in accordance with the needs of the highest minds, and would be unassailable. There is always a cry for this step to be taken, this compromise made. There is always the honest, heartfelt plea, "One further admission, and it sufficeth us." We have need to recall the words of Jesus: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?" We can give no other account of Jesus than St. Paul gave—to some a stumbling-block, to others foolishness, but to those who receive Him, the power of God and the wisdom of God. The Church rests on a definite foundation, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the one revelation of the Father. Those who demand some modification of this basis urge the needs of their individual satisfaction. It has been well said, "They confound the right of the individual, which is to be free, with the duty of an institution, which is to be something." Philip thought that he was justified in making a small demand for the satisfaction of his own honest, upright, conscientious soul. He did not see that his demand involved a contradiction of all that Jesus had come to declare. With all his reasonableness he had only taken an outside view of the matter. He needed some glow of enthusiasm, some spark of emotion, some touch of his spiritual being to raise him to a higher level, to make him capable of a larger view. Then he could understand that Jesus had not come

to satisfy the outworn traditions of his early training, the problems of society or politics amongst which he lived, the questionings which outward circumstances suggested. He had come to raise him to newness of life, to carry him into a higher world than the world of sense, where, moving in a larger sphere, he might feel and know that "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." So it is still, and so it must ever be. There are limits to the sensible, practical spirit as applied to religion. It deals admirably with outlying points of doctrine or of organization. When it reaches the centre it is powerless, and the answer to its earnest and well-meant demands must ever be the same: "Lift up your hearts."

I turn to a few reflections on personal religion. Enough is said at the present day about religious doubt, its causes and its remedies. But there is a large class of devout and fervent souls, who yet are dissatisfied in their inmost hearts. They have no intellectual difficulties, they are entirely and scrupulously orthodox; but they feel that religion does not do for them all that they expect, and all that they wish. They want to be more religious than they feel they are. Religious motives do not directly inspire their conduct or animate their lives. Their opinions are clear on separate points, but do not somehow unite to form a system which is present and powerful to direct their actions and help them in their difficulties. They are anxious for instruction, but the instruction does not come home to them. They are like Philip; they have been watching and waiting; but something, some little thing, is needed to give them complete satisfaction.

The reason of their difficulty is the same as that of Philip's. The good, sensible, sincere mind has limits which it does not like to admit. Its religion has grown up as



occasion required or as opportunity offered. Men have taken religion as an accompaniment of their ordinary life, an explanation of what could not otherwise be explained. They have begun from themselves, from the facts of their individual life. They have regarded religion as part of their mental furniture. It has been kept in a strictly practical sphere, and has been directed to strictly practical objects. All has been done carefully, scrupulously, uprightly; but there has been no abandonment of self, no glimpse into a higher spiritual world. They have heard about such things, but have expected them to come from outside, to be put before them, to be apprehended rather than felt. Their view is outward, their desires are outward. To them the kingdom of God must come by observation; they do not know that the kingdom of God is within them. They look for something more, some declaration, some explanation, some feeling of certainty. To them, too, is the answer, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?"

The temptation is natural and obvious, to begin from ourselves as we are, from our own lives, our own characters, our own ways of looking at things, and then to demand that to these the eternal order should be made clear, and that they, just as they are, should be made part of the higher harmony. Because this result is not achieved, there is a sense of dissatisfaction, there is a consciousness of something lacking. Then this vague sense of dissatisfaction centres round some particular point: if only that difficulty were removed, all would be clear. The sensible man vindicates his claim to common sense by defining his exact requirements, and is proud of this display of his capacity. Yet if he paused to think, he would admit that in the smaller

matters of life this method had not been the method by which he had progressed. His practical difficulties had not been removed by any definite solution given to the question in the form in which he first set it before himself. Rather the experience of life widened his views, enlarged his sphere of action, and raised him above his first difficulties by absorbing them in larger and higher problems. So it is always. So especially must it be with the religious life, which will not satisfy the narrow questionings that are put forward by imperfect apprehension. Following Christ means living into a large spiritual world. Philip followed Christ after the flesh ; Philip interpreted Him according to his own ideas and prejudices ; Philip constructed a system of his own, and demanded that Jesus should satisfy him by filling up what was lacking to his well-meant inquiry. He did not see that the life of Jesus was in itself the answer to his demand. He did not see that it was the only possible revelation of the Father. He had not caught its spirit, because his eyes were fixed, not upon Jesus in the first place, but upon himself. Beginning from himself he went to Jesus to supply what he could not by himself discover. Had he looked more steadfastly on Jesus, he would have gained a new power of vision ; old things would have passed away, and all things would have become new. The signs of the presence of the Father would have been everywhere manifest to his eyes.

The religion that appeals mainly to common sense leaves a sense of dissatisfaction. The stirring practical man, whose views are clear, whose action is decided, feels at the bottom of his mind a doubt if he has advanced so far as he supposes. There is a barrier somewhere which seems set against him. Activity and assertion

are oftentimes the outward signs of inward disquiet. The attempt to build up an individual life round self, which is cultivated by self-centred speculation, leaves, after all, a lurking sense of failure. Religion means self-surrender for the purpose of self-elevation. We do not know at first how far that self-surrender has to go. We have to learn that as well as all else. We fail if we arbitrarily limit that process. Philip followed Jesus bravely, nobly; but he set himself the limits within which he was to walk in his course of following. He did not let his emotions carry him on; he did not say, "Lord, I will follow whithersoever Thou goest." He knew what he wanted; he did not pause to think if he could become capable of receiving more. In all pursuits there is a point where success becomes possible; to stop short of that point, however little short, means that the previous labour has been well-nigh wasted. Men check their spiritual growth because they assume a particular level of their spiritual being, and on that level set their house in order. They shrink, though they know it not, from the call to come up higher. They shrink from an enthusiasm which might mislead them. They refuse to think it possible that through it they might enter upon a larger field.

The religious life admits of no limitations. We must go to God for all that He will give. What that is we do not know; we cannot prescribe the way in which He shall give us our knowledge. We may have had Jesus a long time with us, and yet may not have known Him. We may have asked Him to do for us individually what is not in accordance with His message to all mankind. We may go to Him anxious only about the fashions of a day that pass away and are forgotten, so anxious about them that we will not lift up our hearts into the region where joy and peace eternally dwell.



THE MEMORIES OF THE PAST.



# THE MEMORIES OF THE PAST.

*(Preached before the University of Oxford.)*

“ If I had said, I will speak thus ; behold, I had dealt treacherously with the generation of Thy children.”—PSALM lxxiii. 15.

THIS psalm is one of three which discuss the moral problem of the world—the harmony of a Divine design with the actual facts of human life. It is the same problem as is presented in the Book of Job ; the problem, old but ever new, which tries the faith of each generation of mankind. We talk as if faith were easier in simpler days ; but the records of men’s spiritual experience scarcely bear out this supposition. The reconciliation of human suffering with Divine justice was as difficult for the writer of the Book of Job as it is to the modern philosopher. The recognition of a moral government of the world was as perplexing in the time of David as it is to-day. If we have grasped more of the ennobling power of effort and of the purifying power of suffering, we are still at a loss to reconcile the merciless action of natural and social forces with the benign authority of a merciful God.

I do not, however, purpose to discuss this question in itself ; I only wish to notice one moment in the process by which the writer of this psalm attained to a triumphant



solution of his difficulty. For the solution in his case was not only satisfactory, but triumphant—triumphant universally as well as personally. The wicked might be prosperous, the righteousness of the righteous might bring them no tangible rewards; but the Psalmist could nevertheless exclaim, "Surely God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart," and could say for himself, "My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

He tells us his problem—the overweening arrogance of the wicked engendered by their exceptional prosperity, and the consequent falling away of many well-meaning men whose faith could not hold out against this contradiction of their expectations. For a moment he himself was tempted to join in the general apostacy; but he rose superior to the temptation, and speaks in the exaltation of his triumph. In the process of his victory there were two chief moments: first, the means whereby he freed himself from the temptation which carried others away; secondly, the means whereby he restored the unity of his mental conceptions. In fact, the psalm tells us of a danger, a flight, a rally, and a victory.

The danger came from without; it was a danger not of his own seeking; it was forced upon him by facts which he could not help observing. The flight was the result of contagious panic; he listened to the comments of others, and was on the point of joining the multitude in the measures of self-preservation dictated by despair. But larger considerations occurred to his mind, and he rallied. He used the time which he thus gained in seeking strength where strength was to be found, and he was rewarded by a larger measure of spiritual insight. "It was too hard for

me, until I went into the sanctuary of God: then I understood." His victory was the result of deeper understanding, accorded to a sincere search for truth in an earnest and reverent spirit. What the mind, relying on the maxims of worldly wisdom, could not grasp, was clear to the soul aflame with the fire of devotion. As the Psalmist prayed his horizon expanded; and on a larger field his difficulties needed no special solution, but lost their semblance of overpowering greatness, and even sunk into insignificance. It is a splendid parable of all victories of faith.

I propose to-day to confine your attention to the first step which led to this triumph, to the motives which rendered possible what I have called the rally amid the prevailing panic. Before the Psalmist reached out his hands to God his thoughts went forth towards his fellow-men. "If I had said, I will speak thus; behold, I had dealt treacherously with the generation of Thy children." The consciousness of human duties, the sense of human companionship, the recognition of a corporate life,—these were the feelings that first came to his help when the foundations of his moral and religious life were shaken. It was through these feelings that he first recognized the true meaning of the problem, the full extent of its bearing upon his future self.

It is in the light of that knowledge that the early part of the psalm is written. Only through the self-consciousness which he gained by his momentary reflection did analysis become possible. Then he realized that the prevailing scepticism was really a moral panic, and had to be regarded as such. We are all familiar with the results of a sudden alarm in the outward surroundings of life. The first instinctive movement of all involved is towards self-preservation by the most obvious means. The first thought is of self; the first

impulse is towards action. Many have no better thoughts and no wiser impulses to fall back upon. Those who have moral or intellectual force recover themselves. They either admit that self-preservation is not the first duty, or recognize that what seemed the most obvious way to safety is not the most secure. They pause to think ; and by reflection their equilibrium is restored. Then they can survey the situation, and the danger no longer seems so imminent as it did at first.

So it was with the Psalmist. The men amongst whom he lived awoke, more or less suddenly, to the consciousness that the times were out of joint. There were conspicuous instances of successful villainy, of down-trodden merit, of righteousness forsaken. Men were despondent ; they despaired of society as it was, of life as they had lived it ; they were ready to abandon their old ideas in favour of others taught them by their new experience. There was, in fact, a moral and religious panic, which swept away many well-intentioned persons by the gathering force of the counsels of despair.

I think that we forget the constant recurrence of such periods of panic in the spiritual life of mankind. They leave little trace behind them, for cowardice is generally unknown, and cannot be recorded ; while heroism at such crises is a purely individual matter. We know nothing of the events referred to in this psalm ; indeed, they are no doubt largely subjective, and mainly correspond to a moment in the writer's spiritual experience. But such waves of doubt and despondency rise and swell, and work their shipwrecks at all times—neither more nor less, it may be, now than in any previous age. It is, I incline to think, a preconception of every generation that its problems are exceptionally important, its difficulties exceptionally severe, and that a great

crisis is imminently impending. The problems of each generation are doubtless different ; it is difficult to appraise their relative importance, or to co-ordinate those of the past with those of the present. But of one thing I am tolerably sure, that difficulties are not really great in proportion to the fluency with which they can be stated.

In politics, perhaps, we are dimly conscious that this is true. One engaged in public life said to me, " Ever since I took an interest in public affairs, now nearly forty years ago, the country has always been said to be on the brink of ruin ; my only consolation is that it has not yet fallen over." I dare say the elder of my hearers can recall their own unfulfilled prophecies of impending crashes ; even the youngest may remember alarming crises which passed harmlessly away. The fabric of society is stronger than our fears represent it. Nothing is so inevitable that a few resolute men may not avert it. Panics set in, but they are calmed by the efforts of a few. Currents are powerful only when they work for themselves a deep but narrow channel ; the wide expanse of flood subsides as quickly as it rises.

Now, the Psalmist regards his religious trial in some such way as we should regard our searchings of heart about political matters ; for to him the two points of view were not so widely separated as they are to us. The politician has to grow accustomed to waves of public opinion, which rise from insufficient causes, and fall as those causes are better understood. He learns, if he be honest, to stand to his own principles, and work out his own conceptions, steering steadily on his chosen course, whether the winds be fair or foul. In politics every unpopular cause soon learns to claim the future as its own. Nor do wise men always grieve

over their want of success. They do not repine that they are driven back upon their fundamental principles.

So was it with the writer of this psalm. He rejoiced in the sensation of conscious effort, and felt that he was raised by his inward struggle to a higher level. He could at the end of it look back with derision on his former self. "So brutish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before Thee." What he had undergone was well worth the trouble; it had exalted him in the scale of being. He had risen above what was conventional and arbitrary; he had found an abiding self. At the beginning he was feeble, uncertain, vacillating; at the end he was resolute and steadfast.

I said that the first step in his victory was the sense of human duties. "If I had said, I will speak thus; behold, I had dealt treacherously with the generation of Thy children." Before joining in the rush of fugitives, before making himself a partner of their apostacy, there occurred to him the thoughts of the results of his action upon others; and that thought caused him to slacken his pace and stand aside, at all events, for a time. At first the problem had seemed an individual problem; but a moment's thought showed him its universal bearing. After this, what seemed at first to be self-preservation appeared in its true light as individual cowardice. This was the recognition of a great truth, which requires more consideration than it generally receives. Christianity is sometimes charged with selfishness, with substituting the satisfaction of the individual soul for effort on behalf of the common good, with setting forth future rewards in the place of present endeavour. I will not discuss the truth of this; I admit that selfishness may follow men everywhere, and may insidiously find its way even into the holiest places of their hearts. There are forms of Christianity which are not

entirely free from the reproach. But I would ask if there is no selfishness in unbelief? Is it not often the expression of a feeling of panic? Is it not the satisfaction of the claim of the individual to assert himself at any cost to others? Is not the assertion of the paramount duty "to know the truth for the truth" confused with the assumption that he who makes it has tried his utmost to fit himself for the task? Is there not strangely mixed with denunciations of the asceticism of a superstitious age the glorification of a new asceticism which justifies its sincerity by the pain which it inflicts?

However this may be, the Psalmist, at all events, recognized his responsibility to others, and saw that his problem was not merely an individual problem, which he was free to settle as seemed best in his own eyes. Before he acted, before he spoke, he was bound to consider the far-reaching effects of what he was doing. The step which he was tempted to take, the new assertions which rose to his lips, might seem to him to be dictated by actual facts. But was he prepared to recommend them to others? Was he convinced of their universal truth? If not, surely it were well to pause.

In thinking thus the Psalmist showed the characteristics of a sane and vigorous mind, which saw in life something more than a sum of moments, which recognized a higher duty than purely individual satisfaction. By this he was delivered from the bondage of a passing panic, not by the sacrifice of his individual convictions, but by rising to a higher conception of the powers and duties of his individual nature. He did not shrink from effort; he was superior to the temptations of intellectual indolence; he was freed from the benumbing counsels of despair, as well as from the assumptions of a groundless optimism.



I have said that moral panics are not rare, and that religious difficulties have never ceased to weigh upon the hearts of men. But one thing seems certain, that they ought to be faced with a sense of responsibility. It is not enough to have original ideas; we are bound to consider what general results they lead to. It is not enough to judge by the facts which offer themselves unsought to our eyes; we are bound to extend the field of our observation. It is not enough to talk vaguely about evolution, as certain to decide the future. The teaching of the past shows us that, if human affairs have not exactly gone according to the desires of any enthusiastic leader, they would not have moved as they have done save under the impulse of the effort which that enthusiasm created. The motive-power in affairs is the sum-total of endeavours to work out high ideals. If you are content to have no ideal, nor consistent view, you are dropping out of the ranks of those who labour for human progress. If your thoughts leave you without enthusiasm, without a positive system to strive for, I think you are to some degree guilty of indolence, and imperfectly understand the responsibilities of life. I heard of one whose critical powers enabled him to take such accurate estimate of himself that he did not shrink from admitting the conclusions which followed from his view of life. He said, "I acknowledge that in society, if founded on my conceptions of human nature, there would be no place for self-sacrifice, devotion, or patriotism. I confess that I can as little understand the constancy of Regulus as the devotion of General Gordon. According to my ideas all such sentiments must disappear." "If I had said, I will speak thus; behold, I had dealt treacherously with the generation of Thy children." Was there nothing in the Psalmist's utterance? Does it

merely represent a sentiment, an emotion, which has ceased to have any construing power? From Regulus to General Gordon is a far cry; they lived in different surroundings, they were actuated by different motives, they looked to different sources of support, they had different conceptions of duty. Surely a view of human nature which can find no place for the complex feelings which determined their actions is scarcely a serious view. It can rest on nothing but a temporary despondency; it is only the result of a phase of moral dyspepsia. To admit of no permanent elements in life, save those which are discoverable in one's own worst self at its worst, is not characteristic of mental sanity. I grant that I have quoted probably an extreme case of the moral malady engendered by panic; but there are many degrees of the same disease with which you may be familiar. There is a constant disposition to set up one's own individual self as the measure of all things, to shrink from the search of the large and permanent elements of human nature which are capable of infinite development. Surely the Psalmist chose the wiser way when he was ready to lose his life that he might save it, to merge his own individuality in the sense of a corporate existence, to admit the responsibility which was imposed upon him by the existence of a generation of the children of God.

So the first check upon his individual action was a consciousness of fellowship with others. If he was to be saved, it ought not to be by a hasty flight to some little place where he might secure his own foothold, but which offered no refuge to others. He must be prepared to offer safety also to his comrades. "The generation of God's children"—what was he to ask them to leave? what could he give them in exchange? His thoughts were led along



the course of Israel's previous history, and his mind was sobered by the retrospect. He had first escaped from his immediate self to a sense of his human relations; he next escaped from his immediate experience to a sense of the wider bearing of his problem. If the wicked were now in prosperity, they had not always been so; if the righteous were now downcast, there had been times when their force was felt and recognized for good. The questions of the world, he saw, were not to be solved by reference only to considerations suggested at one particular time; there was a mass of testimony, which had been for the moment thrust into the background, but which could not with wisdom be overlooked.

This was an intellectual conception which it needed time to work out. The Psalmist recognized, however, that some view of the past, some ideal of the future, were rendered necessary if he changed his own attitude. It was not only a self-adjustment to the plain facts of everyday life; it was a new scheme of things which he was bound to construct. I think he was undoubtedly honest and manly, as well as wise, in facing this issue. I think that it is cowardly to seek merely for a private mode of interpretation. I, for my part, feel greater sympathy with the man who adopts a new system of thought, than with one who is languidly indifferent to anything save the immediate moment, or with one who passionately asserts that his chaos is the necessary prelude to a coming system to which he does not strive to give distinctness. The Comtist, or the materialist, at least, offer me a heritage which I can appraise. They have explanations of the past, and intelligible aspirations for the future. But many who shrink from their ideas as crude and unsatisfactory, vindicate their own position as superior persons

by claiming that, in some wondrous manner yet to be discovered, they will preserve the essence of Christianity without any faith in Jesus as the Son of God; that they will preserve the flower in perpetual fragrance when they have severed its connection with its root. The Psalmist showed the sanity of his mind when he saw that he must be either one thing or the other.

It was not, however, the recognition of the intellectual difficulties of his new position which repelled him from it. He was not driven back by the substitution of a new despair for that which he felt at first. He was recalled by the sweetness of forgotten memories, by the charm of words and acts which had been, by the stress of life's difficulties, overlaid for a season in his mind. "If I had said, I will speak thus; behold, I had dealt treacherously with the generation of Thy children." The sense of corporate life, the sense of intellectual responsibility were duties which appeared in all the gravity and sobriety wherewith duty is ever clothed. But behind their stern forms rose another of surpassing beauty, rose the embodiment of the righteous life; and his heart leapt out to greet it, and he again was strong. "The generation of Thy children." There thronged into his mind a flood of reminiscences, of loving companionship, of kindly care, of tender thoughtfulness, of upright dealing, of gentle admonition. Having known these things, could he declare them to be nought? Could he turn away from them to the worship of temporary success? Could he be oblivious of the abiding testimony of God? His heart was kindled anew by the consciousness of God's presence in the world as manifested in the life of his children; and from this faint reflection of the beauty of holiness he was led to a new contemplation of the fount of all

goodness. Then, in his renewed communion with God he found a new self, and rose to a higher level of spiritual insight. "In Thy light I shall see light."

Perhaps these last steps in the Psalmist's record of his consciousness seem fantastic. The first steps were clear, sensible, and to the purpose; the last, it may be urged, were emotional, personal, poetic. They were really not so much a fair solution of his difficulty as an assertion of the traditional basis which assumed the solution. He merely set up a body of sentiment, and allowed it to override the facts of experience, which could then be easily explained away.

Is this a sufficient account of his mental process? Surely he appealed from one set of facts to another, from a smaller and temporary experience to a larger one composed of more abiding elements. He had seen the outward tokens of the success of the ungodly, and had been dismayed; he was enabled to recall the more numerous examples of the inward peace of the righteous. Then he saw how shallow had been his first judgment, how narrow the basis on which those around him were acting, how groundless their panic, how base their desertion of their former principles. He confessed to himself that he had in his own reach the materials for a large judgment, but he had been on the point of forming a small one. He admitted that this showed an imperfect basis of character, a heart which was not set aright, whose impulses did not accord with its best knowledge. He sought communion with God, that by His grace his soul might be so transfused that in the future there might be no room for the vacillations of temporary perplexity.

Surely this was a dignified and worthy attitude of mind, and its process is perfectly intelligible. It was not an

appeal from facts to fancies, but an appeal from some facts, arbitrarily selected, to a larger body of facts which had environed his entire life. We talk about the world as if it were the same thing to us all ; but we are each of us architects and framers of the world which we choose as our dwelling-place. We recognize this in outward things ; we speak of men as architects of their own fortunes ; we praise them for their wisdom, their foresight, their success. But a man's fortunes are more than can be gauged by our standards of measurement. We cannot convert the value of peace of mind, integrity of conscience, or clearness of purpose into pounds sterling ; nor can we appraise human happiness by a balance at the banker's. One man meets another in the ordinary intercourse of life, and exchanges ideas about certain definite objects of practical importance. They may agree about the points under discussion, and about the means to be pursued to give them effect. Neither of them cares to look into the motives of the other. How great may be the difference, in its real meaning to each, of the action on which both are agreed ! So long as the action is useful to society, society gives to both the same meed of recognition ; but there is that in every action which no outward standard can rightly appraise. No act is isolated, or is the result of mere momentary perception ; it rests always upon a basis of character ; it contains in embryo all that a man has been, has thought, has suffered ; it influences to a great extent what he will be, and think, and suffer in the future.

A man's activity in this inward sense depends upon the world in which he lives—the inner world in which, consciously or unconsciously, every man moves and has his being. It is to the contents of this world that a man refers in a crisis ; it is from the experience which this world affords

him that he draws the maxims which guide his conduct. As this world is great or small, so is the character of the individual large or narrow ; according as there is room for new experience, so does its teaching gradually become effective. It is the claim of the Christian that he moves in a large world irradiated with the light of God's Presence. It is objected that his world is so large that it disregards the present, and puts forward motives which concern another life and another state of being than this which is common to us all. But Christianity draws no sharp line between this world and the next ; it promises no absolutely new being in the future, only a perfection of the spiritual life which is begun here. Repentance does not bring a merely formal change in the relationship of man to God : it is the restoration of a shattered character to the realization of its possibilities. Humility is founded on a true knowledge of self ; penitence is the result of bringing that knowledge before God. Holiness is the goal of the Christian here in this world—to be attained by constant effort, animated by a growing knowledge of God and a growing sense of His presence to direct and guide.

The Christian does not live in a world which is removed from his experience ; nay, rather, every step in his progress is the result of direct experience of God's presence, either with himself or with others. As he looks back upon his own past, he sees how he was guided at great crises ; he recognizes perils which he escaped ; he is conscious of issues which were far beyond his foresight ; he has received many answers to his prayers ; he has had times of personal illumination ; he has heard messages of comfort. He does not care to speak commonly about these things ; they cannot be proved, as no facts of the individual life can be

proved. It is only the things which deal with man's animal life which are capable of proof; because the existence of its needs is beyond dispute, and discussion only concerns the methods by which these needs can be supplied. If a man proclaims that life for him contains nothing save a desire to feed and clothe and house himself, I do not see how I am to prove that it contains more. I can show him that many people see more in it, and that they are happy in seeing more; but, in the long run, all that I can do is to try and familiarize him with their examples, and trust that the weight and force of those examples will lead him to enlarge his conceptions. If an educated and cultivated man were to insist that, because he had no ear for music, therefore it was foolish for any one to continue to be susceptible to the harmony of sounds, I should judge that he was deficient in modesty at the least.

The Christian life rests, to the individual Christian, on an assured basis of experience. His faith in Jesus as the Son of God, his sense of his own communion with God through that belief, his consciousness of the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost,—these things may be separated for convenience of definition, but they represent the one abiding background of his daily life, from which his separate actions detach themselves. Without them many of his actions would still be done, and would seem the same to outward view; but they would not, in reality, be the same. For every act is to some degree penetrated by its motive, which shines through it, and gives it a larger or a smaller bearing than its immediate intent. Unthinking good-nature, amiability, and geniality, if they were all combined, could not produce the effect of an action prompted by Christian love; still less would an act of philanthropy which resulted



from a careful consideration of the best interests of society. The act itself in both cases, the definite, tangible thing done, might be exactly the same ; but there would be a wide difference between its influence, and the difference would be immediately felt by the recipient. I dare say that the men whom the Psalmist saw in great prosperity were sometimes very good-natured to him ; and I dare say that many of them justified their prosperity by far-reaching schemes for social improvement according to their lights. But somehow the Psalmist felt that there was more than this. If he had accepted them he would have dealt treacherously with the generation of God's children. Acts of appealing graciousness rose before him, words of far-reaching sympathy rang in his ears. He had seen enough of a world of spiritual beauty to know that, without it, life for him would be for ever an altered and a lower thing.

It is worth while to dwell upon the thought of the power of the Christian life, which always has a charm, a sweetness, a virtue peculiarly its own, and which must ever be the abiding testimony of Christ in the world. In fact, the Church exists that it may produce and educate such a life ; and it is the privilege of the followers of Jesus to set forth in every age some faint reflection of their Master's spirit. This has been felt and admitted universally ; nowadays there is a tendency to explain it away. The Church in the past, it is said, had a monopoly of the principles of conduct, and so can claim all those exceptional beings whose lives profoundly impressed mankind. This is no longer necessary nor desirable, and the State, by means of education, can undertake the production of artists in virtue. Men can be trained to discharge definite functions capably and well ; but no human process can guarantee that integrity of purpose



and singleness of motive on which the charm of the separate acts depends. A student of language can point out the excellences of Shakespere's diction ; one with a fine ear for verse can analyze the exquisiteness of his rhythm ; but no one can create for another that large insight into the human heart which makes him a poet and a teacher. The charm of Christian saintliness depends on its view of human nature, which cannot be the same thing to him who believes in the Incarnation as it is to him who does not believe. Marcus Aurelius could not speak nor act like Polycarp, however much he might have been in common with him on many points of conduct and in many views of life. I would ask you, Have others influenced you or attracted you in proportion to their capacity, their knowledge, or their wisdom ? Men admire cleverness ; they are moved by love. They listen to good advice ; they are induced to act by quiet sympathy. They are carried away by declamation and vain promises ; they come back to that which rests on simple goodness.

The charm of the Christian character is real and is efficacious—more efficacious, I think, than is allowed. It would not do for an artist in virtue to be recognized as such, or his power would at once be gone. The ministry of every Christian life is continuous ; but “the kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation.” It is not easy to write the life of a saint—those who are famous as saints owe their fame to some other cause, as a rule, than their saintliness—and it is often objected that the Calendar of Saints contains an undue number of those who are mere names, and of whose actions little is known. This seems to me natural. When they were gone, men felt that the world was immeasurably poorer for their loss, and showed their sense

of this feeling by a veneration of their memory. Their words, their acts, had passed into the lives of others, and left no independent record; they lived in and for others, and in the memory of others they survived. The service of Christ has produced a Christ-like life, from which men have learned, and by which succeeding ages have been cheered and strengthened, as by the other gifts of God—by the starry firmament, by the song of birds, by the loveliness of the flowers of the field. Men saw and marvelled while the little leaven worked its way, till the Christian life entered into the world's heritage, to carry on for ever its transforming influence.

The world demands work should be done according to its pattern, such ends should be accomplished as it desires, and oftentimes upbraids the Christian life with its tardiness, and sometimes exclaims that its day is past, and its work, such as it is, has come to an end. In some ways the world's reproaches are justified, because the Church has too easily followed the world's example. It has tried to conquer with the world's weapons; it has tried to secure itself against the world by imitating the world's system. Do Christians, even now, admit that their great work for the world is simply to lead in it the Christ-like life? Do we not suffer from panics when we are upbraided with the want of tangible success in definite fields of activity? Do we not sacrifice the charm of the inward life to the outward manifestations of bustling energy? Is there no temptation to secure the testimony of the Church by a copy of worldly organisation rather than the pleading of the Christian life? Are we always contented "in quietness and confidence to possess our strength?"

There are antagonisms which, in some shape or other, run through all the ages. Call them righteousness and

unrighteousness, the Church and the world, religion and science, or what you will, they all come to this: that there are two different ways of viewing life, of which one claims to possess a fuller knowledge, a larger and truer vision than the other. But the claim has to be justified by its results, not merely asserted. The Christian must go along his path

“Studiously the humbler for that pride,  
Professedly the faultier that he knows  
God’s secret, while he holds the thread of life.”

But he must justify himself in his own way, not by accepting the world’s challenge. He cannot give his neighbour the real ground of his life; he cannot pass on by mere words his own conviction. He can only lead his own life as in God’s sight, and pray that, so far as it is genuine, it may be absorbed into the mass of testimony for God. He will neither despise nor over-estimate the changes of intellectual fashions, but above and beyond them will discern the Divine purposes, and will see God fulfilling Himself in divers ways. He will live and work in a spirit of large hopefulness, alien from no man, judging no man, ministering quietly and unobtrusively to all. He will not be moved by jeers, nor be anxious overmuch to prove himself in the right. He will desire no striking signs of his influence, but will always be ready for the daily work of self-sacrifice, by self-effacement and abundant charity. The fruit of his labours is the continuous testimony to the reality of a spiritual life, to the power of his own conviction, to the certainty that human nature can only find its fulfilment in the consciousness of communion with a living God.



RELIGION AND POLITICS.



# RELIGION AND POLITICS.

*(Preached in the Temple Church.)*

“And Ahab said unto Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?”—1 KINGS xxi. 20.

THIS cry of Ahab expresses more than the natural sense of discomfort, which attends on the first awakening of conscience when the sense of wrong-doing has been brought home. It expresses a feeling of resentment against the existence of conscience at all. We are all familiar with the fact that the voice of conscience comes as the voice of an accuser, and that the first impulse of the accused is to find pleas by which he can rebut the accusation. It is a further development in the progress of moral decay that a protest should be raised against the mere existence of a judge, that his power should be deliberately minimized, and that he should be regarded distinctly as an enemy. Shakespeare has depicted with entire definiteness this attitude of terror and repugnance towards conscience: “I’ll not meddle with it; it is a dangerous thing; it makes a man a coward. ’Tis a blushing shame-faced spirit that mutinies in a man’s bosom; it fills one full of obstacles; it beggars a man that keeps it; it is turned out of towns and cities for a dangerous thing; and every man that means to live well



endeavours to trust to himself and live without it." The statement is perfectly true. "Every man that means to live well endeavours to trust to himself" is an unimpeachable maxim of worldly prudence. All depends on the meaning given to the word "well." From the point of view of material gain, material comfort, material success, conscience is an expensive luxury, in which worldly wisdom will advise the would-be successful man to economize. "All economy," it will say to him, "is painful; but the reduction of the moral sense within the limits of enlightened expediency is an economy well worth making. A man is only strong when he is master of himself; it is worth your while to make an effort to secure that your self-respect should unhesitatingly wait upon your actions."

Now, Ahab had dimly comprehended this truth. He was not prepared to dispense with conscience altogether; its absence would have caused a conscious void. He had not yet succeeded in subduing his conscience into subservience to his will. Indeed, this is rather a difficult process; and requires a mental versatility of which we find no traces in Ahab's character. He admired Jezebel's success in this matter, and respected her accordingly; but he himself was unable to rise above an attitude of petulant antagonism to all that ran counter to his wishes. He was a good, easy man, who wished to wrong no one. He was a king, and had a right to live royally; so long as others respected his right, he was willing that they should go their own way in quietness. It was a very natural desire that led him to increase the beauty of the grounds which surrounded his palace. He offered Naboth all that one man could offer another for the site of his vineyard. It was ill-mannered of Naboth to refuse; it was ridiculous that he should set

up old-fashioned prejudices to bar a scheme which would certainly make a great improvement, and would almost amount to a national benefit. Ahab felt himself an aggrieved man; and he had not the courage to put his disappointment aside, nor had he the resoluteness to work his will at all costs. So he gave way to a fit of childish petulance in the hope that some one would come to his help. He was not disappointed, for the strong mind of his wife at once devised a short and easy way of dealing with objections. If Naboth was an obstacle to the king's wishes, Naboth must be removed as an example to others. The matter was not a private and personal matter; it was one of great political importance, as the credit of the Government was at stake. So Jezebel did not attempt to settle the matter quietly; she determined to teach the people a lesson. Naboth was not put out of the way by private assassination; he was slain by a judicial murder. The ordinary machinery of the law was put in force against him; the queen's command was enough to prevent the course of justice. Naboth fell, not by the king's hand, but by the condemnation of his fellow-citizens. His refusal to obey the royal command was ruled to be equivalent to treason and blasphemy. In a corrupt condition of popular feeling there was no lack of witnesses, and no lack of zeal in the prosecution of an innocent man. Indeed, most people must have sincerely felt that the old-fashioned conservatism of Naboth was sorely out of place in a progressive state of society; and we cannot doubt that Naboth's austerity had made him an extremely unpopular character. Certainly he disturbed the harmony of the national life, and was better out of the way.

Ahab stood by, and saw, and listened to all that was passing. Perhaps he was rather surprised at first to find

what a sorely injured man he really was. Then he grew delighted to discover that his sense of injury, after all, was not merely personal, but rested on a number of important considerations which had never occurred to him before. By the time that he entered on possession of the vineyard, he was almost persuaded that he was a national benefactor in raising the question of Naboth's conduct. Certainly he had not done more than raise the question, which, when once raised, had settled itself by the operation of natural causes. There had been a general agreement that Naboth's conduct was indefensible ; and he had paid the penalty which popular opinion pronounced to be his due. So Ahab went to Naboth's vineyard with a comfortable feeling that things had settled themselves in a very satisfactory way. He had got what he wanted, and every one had helped him to get it. It had not been necessary for him to lift his finger in the matter. He had only stated his wishes, and there had been a unanimous opinion that those wishes ought to be gratified. He regarded himself as one of the most reasonable of men, whose reasonableness had been universally recognized, and whose good qualities had won for him a striking and flattering expression of popular confidence, before which a cantankerous gainsayer had been literally swept away. With the consciousness of being appreciated by those with whom he had to do, with a thrill of pleasure at the thought that the national sentiment accorded so completely with his own wishes, Ahab was proceeding to devise some excellent design for laying out the land which he had acquired, in such a way as to get credit for his good taste, and still further justify popular confidence by showing what fine things he could do. Just then there arose before him the stern face, the ascetic figure of the

prophet Elijah. A flood of forgotten memories rushed back to the king's mind, and suddenly rolled away his feelings of pleasure. He could not explain the sudden revulsion which came upon him. He only knew that the sunlight died out of the landscape, and the poetry faded from his dream. It was not unnatural that he should smart under a sense of personal wrong. Might he not have been allowed a little time to enjoy himself? Elijah's appearance just then, however excellent his intentions, amounted to positive persecution; and with an anticipation of disappointment and weariness he exclaimed, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

It is an old story, you will say, a familiar instance of the moral corruption caused by despotism, especially by a despotism of the Oriental type. It shows us a king nurtured in self-indulgence till he is forgetful of the rights of others; it shows us a queen who acts as the tyrannical minister of an indolent monarch; it shows us a civil society debased into servility, and destitute of the rudiments of justice. No doubt this is historically true; but none the less these things were written for our learning. The great features of human character do not materially change, and human motives remain substantially the same throughout the ages. I will not apologize for asking you to take this incident as a parable of the corrupting influence inherent in the possession of power, of the antagonism which must always exist between the spirit of the Gospel of Christ and the precepts of political expediency.

I spoke of the corrupting influence inherent in the possession of power—not only the power of an Oriental despot, but power of any kind. The promises of the gospel are to the lowly and the humble, to those who become as little

children. Our Lord rebuked the spirit of rivalry and competition, when the question was raised amongst the disciples which of them should be held the greatest. "The kings of the Gentiles have lordship over them; and they that have authority over them are called Benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief as he that doth serve." The whole tenor of the life and the teaching of Jesus went to show both that the possession of power was dangerous to the spiritual well-being of its possessor; and also that power was not the Divinely appointed means of healing the breaches of humanity, and bringing order and peace into the world. This is generally admitted, but is admitted reluctantly as a counsel of perfection, not to be realized in the actual world. Indeed, it is often urged against Christianity that its principles are anti-social, and that its exhortations to progress by means of spiritual growth from within, rather than by means of reforms wrought violently from without, is merely a decent way of expressing its own practical incompetence. While this is urged on one side, on the other side men point to the medieval Church as an example of the evils of an ecclesiastical government. Nowadays men find fault with the Church because it does not lend more effective aid to the police. In former times men overthrew the political power of the Church because its exercise of disciplinary jurisdiction was excessive. I think we may be content to learn the lesson that the Spirit of God works by influence, and not by power. I think we may take it for granted that the gospel encourages no man to seek for power, and warns all men of its dangers, when it comes unsought. Further, any one who enters upon a career which aims at political power,

even for the highest motives, must be prepared to find that the law of God rises before him, sometimes in the hour of his greatest triumph—rises before him with the austere face of an enemy.

I would venture to call your attention to one or two ways in which public life may conceivably endanger that complete sense of individual responsibility on which Christian morality must be founded.

1. There is a tendency at the present day to speak as if political responsibility were no longer vested in the hands of individuals, as if democratic institutions had put into commission individual responsibility altogether. We point with horror to the doings of absolute monarchs in the past, and are thankful that the time is gone when the will of one man could work such appalling results. Yet it is hard to admit that the career of a modern statesman is free from the responsibilities attaching to the exercise of power, because he is chosen at intervals to exercise it, and is subject to periodical removal from its exercise. Tyranny was always tempered by revolution; absolute monarchs were always conscious of practical limits; they always had to secure a body of adherents on whom they could rely, and on whose fidelity their power was based. Despite their claims of Divine right, they were always in some sense party leaders, and had to keep their party together. If their nature was at all inclined towards good, it had this immense support, that it was compelled to recognize the absoluteness of personal responsibility. The office of kings could scarcely be resigned, the obligations were lifelong; the duty of repairing disaster fell on him who incurred disaster; there was no chance of avoiding blame or finding excuses for failure. The theory of the Divine rights of kings



implied a high sense of responsibility attending on the exercise of power. The theory "*Vox populi vox Dei*" may be so interpreted as to absolve the possessor of power from any moral responsibility at all. The conditions of modern life tend to diminish the sense of responsibility, and make room for political fatalism. It is assumed that forces are at work which it is beyond man's power to direct, forces which are Titanic, monstrous, indefinite. Provided a politician does what is popular, it is immaterial whether or no he does what is right; if he is not prepared to carry out the popular will, he has no right to a place in public life at all. Such arguments are equivalent to an abdication of responsibility on the part of those who aim at directing affairs. But is this plea genuine? Is there really an irresistible current of public opinion which is beyond human guidance? Is it not the fact that public opinion is first carefully fostered and created by politicians, before they use it? Do they not form it more than they are formed by it? A politician is not merely an official of the people; he is an educator of the people. If it were otherwise, undoubtedly politics would be excluded from the sphere of morality altogether. But a politician cannot be allowed to get rid of his conscience so cheaply as this. The plain facts are against him. When he is not in power he is attempting to educate public opinion till it puts him in power. He is responsible for the ends which he chooses, and the means which he employs. One who determines to take part in public life must be exhorted to recognize the reality of his responsibility, and to advance to his self-chosen task with eyes open to the many temptations which will tend to make him forget it.

2. Ahab's example shows the readiness with which a man in possession of power can confuse his personal

advantage with the general good. Of course the grosser forms of violence, extortion, and injustice have now been banished from public life in England; but more subtle and less palpable forms of the same impulse still remain. To abandon a career for conscience' sake, to make a stand when you are not sure of being supported, to hold lightly the applause of men, to lay aside readily the dignity attaching to an important position,—all this is difficult. I need not recount the many temptations which, in political life, beset the integrity of conscience, and substitute for principles a succession of expedient compromises. The politician soon acquires a double conscience, with which his representative capacity tends to make him familiar. He begins by arguing that it is not his own views which he is working out, after all; that he is limited by the effective demands of the majority. He identifies himself energetically in speech with things of which in his heart he is only faintly persuaded. He does so from the sufficient motive of the need of unity of action. But when once he enters on this career of compromise he rapidly advances. He becomes a cog in a wheel, till the habit of going round in the same place becomes a second nature. He ceases to think of the direction in which the wheel is moving, and only thinks that he is part of it, and must move with the whole. I need not pursue the analysis. The considerations are obvious by which a man convinces himself that his sayings and doings are interwoven in the web of the world's affairs, and cannot safely be disentangled. The sense of individual responsibility, even of individual life, becomes absorbed in the movement of machinery, wherewith the factory of the world's affairs deafens the ears of its workmen.

3. Ahab tried to keep a good conscience by avoiding



any personal action, and asking no questions about what happened. He had had no part nor lot in the removal of Naboth; he wished for his vineyard, and he got it, that was all. I am afraid that it is impossible not to recognize in this trait the true temperament of the politician. He says, with a sigh, "A good deal of dirty work goes on in the world, and I am afraid that sometimes I get the advantage of it." He says to his supporters, "I suppose we fight to win," and then asks no questions about the means which are employed. He turns his back and shuts his eyes, lest he should see anything that might shock him. He deplors the excesses of party spirit, but he does nothing to moderate them. We all of us hold up to execration the maxim that the end justifies the means; but we must honestly confess that it is easier to condemn this maxim in the abstract than to keep clear of applying it in practice. In the contests of political life it is hard to steer a straight course and keep a conscience void of offence.

4. One other consideration only I would put before you. Ahab's attempt to keep his hands clean led obviously to an attitude of cynical disdain towards the world around him. That attitude is one into which it is easy for the politician to fall. He sees too much of the motives by which men are moved. He despises those who allow themselves to be taken in by such poor stuff as he knows that he sometimes puts before them. Ahab might be very glad to have Naboth's vineyard; but he cannot have had a high opinion of the judges who condemned Naboth to death. One who addresses popular audiences probably begins cautiously, and speaks with moderation; but he sees that the most violent utterances win the loudest cheers, and that trenchant personal attacks are for the moment the most telling.

Too often a man lightly justifies his remarks : " It was good enough to say." Surely such a justification involves a cynical disregard for truth, and a forgetfulness of the primary duty which is imposed upon one who goes forth into public life.

This duty I take to be a sense of the dignity of the service of man, and a resolve that his own service of his fellow-men shall be as entire and genuine as possible. Public life has its dangers, but it has its ideal—an ideal, however, which, like all other ideals, cannot be pursued without a capacity for renunciation and self-sacrifice. It can be no part of the service of man to humour prejudice contrary to the dictates of knowledge ; to substitute denunciation for argument ; to misrepresent opponents that a cheap victory may be gained by their triumphant overthrow ; to disguise the real questions at issue ; and to pour out clap-trap instead of diffusing information. Such occupations are at once pleasant, easy, and profitable. Men would fain persuade themselves that they are also right, or, at least, inevitable. The Christian moralist who ventures to break the silence of acquiescence cannot be surprised at the exclamation, " Hast thou found me, O mine enemy ? "

Perhaps you are doubtful about the practical utility of discussing such a subject as this. It is easy to say either that things are not so bad, after all, or to say that anyhow we must make the best of them. There is a third course open to us—to try and improve them ; and this must begin in a frank recognition by individuals of their individual duty. Many men are interested in politics, and take part in them. Much depends on their attitude. Let us see how this can be amended.

" Democracy," it was said long ago, " is founded

on virtue." In a democratic state politics are necessarily a mighty means of popular education, and every man who takes any part in them should do so with the spirit of a teacher. It is saddening to hear current phrases which imply that an election is a great calamity, that it stirs up ill-will, that it generates animosity, that its appeal is to greed on one side and panic on the other. Why should this be so? Political discussion presents, or ought to present, definite issues on which, it is true, opinions differ; but it is possible that differences of opinion should be plainly and clearly stated, and that the points involved be reasonably and temperately discussed. Current language implies that this is rarely what takes place. Surely every one in his degree can do something to make this the ordinary mode of procedure. We deplore wars, and form societies for promoting peace among all nations. Do we try to abolish at home that attitude of aggression, that desire to have our own way at any cost, which is the cause of war? No points which concern the national life are so important as that the national intelligence should be trained by wise argument, and the national conscience heightened by a strict observance of justice and moderation. He is the truest patriot who proclaims that he would rather see the second-best way triumph by worthy means than secure the victory of the best way by unworthy means.

In no capacity in life so much as in politics is a man's character immediately influential apart from the things which he does. The moral tone of all Englishmen is heightened or lowered by the character of those on whose actions all men's eyes are fixed, and whose words all men weigh. Every statesman has much power for good or evil. Every member of Parliament in his own neighbourhood has many

opportunities of teaching the people on subjects in which the popular mind is interested. He should be saddled with a sense of his responsibility. His audience come prepared to applaud, for he is their recognized leader ; they do not come to criticize, but to shout. There is danger in this knowledge ; there is a temptation to humour prejudices by empty invective and smart denunciation. Let us ask him to remember that he owes a duty to the nation to speak the truth, to set forth his opinions by honest arguments, to teach his hearers and not to corrupt them. This duty of labouring to sweeten what is bitter in the waters of political life is one which devolves on those who have leisure, intelligence, and sufficient detachment from actual affairs to enable them to weigh not only the immediate results but the far-off issues. Such there are, undoubtedly, everywhere. Do they recognize that they ought to make a return for their advantages by striving to be of use to those who are bearing the burden and heat of the day ?

It has been well said, " Good men have often tended to be too abstract in their views, to put the general idea of God in the place of all the particulars which should come under it, and to forget that a religion is nothing which does not create out of itself new politics, a new social and even economical order of life ; which does not bring beauty and truth with it as well as piety ; which does not make human life more humane in both senses of the word." Surely these words deserve weighing. Christianity beautifies many an individual life, and sheds a lustre over the life of many a family. Its influence is less conspicuous in the life of business ; it pales in the sphere of what is called society, and is still dimmer in politics ; in the region of international obligations it can scarcely be said to exist. It is well to

begin at the bottom, but we must not stay there. We need a more conscious and deliberate application of the principles of Christian morality to every department of life. It is not wholesome that the region of political life should be regarded as dubious. Christian men must act with reference to Christian principles. The Church has a message to the State which it must deliver with quiet dignity and unwearied persistence. Above all the tumults of the world's wordy warfare, it must point to the great Head of humanity, who "did not strive, nor cry, nor lift up His voice in the street," but transformed the world by the example of His patience ; to Him, by union with whom a man becomes indeed a man ; to Him whose indwelling Presence alone gives greatness to the world and its affairs.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF NATURE AND THE  
KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.





## THE KNOWLEDGE OF NATURE AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

*(Preached before the British Association at Ipswich.)*

“In Thy light shall we see light.”—Ps. xxxvi. 9.

How marvellous a thing is human knowledge—not so much in itself as in the fact that it exists! We take it for granted in everything that we do. We use it as a common, as a natural possession. Yet more wonderful than the contents of our knowledge is the process by which it has been gained. More amazing than the vastness of the universe is man's power of perceiving the laws which govern it, and of bringing them into relation with his own needs. This is the great thought which, I think, should rise in the minds of all who reflect for a moment on what is meant by a meeting of the British Association. Some of you are privileged to take an active part in its proceedings; many of you are present as learners; all of you are interested in its doings. They represent the results of a year's labour and thought on the part of those who are engaged in investigating the world in which we live. That labour and thought on the part of each individual begins from a vast store of accumulated labour and thought handed down by those who have gone before. It is for him to strive and carry it

forward; to make some small advance in a particular sphere; to rearrange, it may be, or to judge the work of his predecessors; to reduce it to more intelligible form; to suggest new subjects of investigation; to verify or disprove particular arguments; to bring all that is known into more direct relation with human life, and make it available for the satisfaction of human needs. Such objects appeal to the sympathies of all. No man can be unmoved by them. It gives him confidence to know that some of his most important interests are in the hands of a self-selected body of his fellows, and he follows their deliberations with respect. The abiding result of such a meeting as this is to turn men's minds to an appreciation of the processes by which knowledge is gained.

It is to this subject that I also would turn your thoughts to-day, believing that it would be of use to all alike; for the simplest thoughts are most welcome to the wise, and that which is most obvious is most readily overlooked. My thoughts on such a subject can only be of the simplest.

The beginning of knowledge lies in man's power of reflection. He does not live from day to day, but thinks of the morrow. He observes, and remembers, and compares the results of his observations. Hence come inventiveness, and the capacity for combination with others in the pursuit of common objects. From these qualities spring man's power over nature; and it was power, not knowledge, which he first pursued. Moreover, as man by inventiveness obtained power over outward nature, he made society possible. If inventiveness was awakened by the desire for more ready means to supply natural wants, combination with others was necessary to use these means to advantage. When you have combination for the purpose of developing inventiveness,

you have in a rudimentary form both the motive and the means of the pursuit of knowledge. I have said that this pursuit was at first purely utilitarian. Men did not so much wish to know, as to have the advantages which came from the possession of knowledge. But in one sense these advantages were no sooner gained than they were lost. For if every increase in knowledge of the outside world gave man additional power, that increased power made their combination on a larger scale inevitable. No sooner was a need supplied, than the fact of its supply increased the number of those who claimed its benefits. In other words, every growth of knowledge made society more complex. Let me try and explain my meaning by an instance. Let us suppose that the beginning of nautical astronomy was made by the rower, who, driven out of sight of land by some mishap, and overtaken by the darkness of the night, recalled the aspect of the heavens as he had seen it from the door of his hut, and steered his course homewards by trying to keep the same appearance steadfastly before his eyes. As this became a method of general use, observations of the skies grew more accurate. Men trusted in the results of their new knowledge and became more adventurous. From this came trade, and with trade came both the possibility and the necessity of a larger number of men resident in the same place. The same result was produced by every increase, however small, of human knowledge. That is to say, with greater knowledge of nature went a corresponding advance in human society, which was directly caused by it. We may, if we choose, divide knowledge into branches, such as natural science, social science; but this is a division made for our own convenience. It does not correspond with the process by which knowledge was originally acquired.

I said that the pursuit of knowledge was originally utilitarian ; but you will observe that the mere pursuit of some definite aim was impossible. Its attainment led to unexpected results. Utilitarianism defeated its own object. Men wished merely to supply their own needs ; but in so doing they called into existence neighbours, whose growing needs demanded greater inventiveness for their supply. Mankind, it has been said, was like Saul, the son of Kish, who went out to find his father's asses, and found a kingdom. Men joined together for the chase and sat down to eat a common meal ; and there arose society, with a new set of problems, with new needs, opening up a new field for the exercise of observation and inventiveness. Moreover, these new problems were different in kind from the old ones. Society, which came into existence for the supply of obvious needs, began at once to create needs of its own, which were not equally obvious. It needed regulation ; it raised questions about rights and duties ; it developed moral conceptions, which only became apparent as the sphere of human relationships was extended. Man himself, the individual man, came into prominence, and was curious to discover his own powers, their meaning, and their origin. If the observer of nature came first, he created by his observations a society which needed an organizer ; and for the purpose of organizing society it was necessary to study the nature of the individuals of whom it was composed. Each step in the advance of any one of these branches tended to lead to an advance in the others. When man invented some simple weapons which enabled him to find his food when he wanted it, he brought about a development of society ; in the life of society man became conscious of individual powers, and turned his attention inwards on himself. This growth of

self-consciousness gave him a sense of dignity, kindled his aspirations, made him confident. These qualities acted through the social organism, created new wants, and therefore inspired to greater effort. Effort was directed to wring from reluctant nature more of her secrets, that she might be rendered more submissive, and therefore more fruitful. As society developed there was formed a leisured class which might undertake three functions necessary — the pursuit of knowledge of the outward world, the regulation of society, and the moral development of man. When this leisured class existed, the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake first became possible. For the desire to know is founded on a belief that all knowledge will somehow become fruitful to society; a consciousness that man cannot exactly prescribe his needs and have them immediately satisfied; a sense that the accumulation of knowledge creates, at all events, a store-house from which might be drawn materials for many purposes.

I need not follow this process of development any further. I have shown you how the man of science, as we know him, may conceivably have come into being. He was not the result of continuous attention to his own subject; he was the product of a process which involves all the elements which have wrought out human progress. There has been no continuous development of natural science on its own lines only; it has had long periods of barrenness and periods of rapid advance. Similarly there has been no continuous development of the organization of human society; systems have been tried and have fallen to pieces, and those who were subject to them have been swept away. There has been no continuous growth in man's self-knowledge or in his love of virtue; from time to time great thoughts have been

put forward or great impulses given, and men have striven to assimilate and to rise. If we seek for continuity, it is only to be found in the largest view of the working of all these things together, in the consideration of their action one upon another. To a certain point we can see this connection, enough certainly to justify an hypothesis which brings them all together. The mind which attempts a survey of the world in all its parts finds a purely rational hypothesis of the unity of the universe and man in the conception of a great First Cause, whom we as Christians know by His revelation of Himself as God our Father. Only by the belief in God, in some form or other, as indicating or affirming an essential unity between the purpose of the individual life and the purpose of the universe, has science, or society, or man, progressed in the past. Nor is it to my mind conceivable that without it there should be any progress in the future. So profound is the exclamation of the Psalmist, "In Thy light shall we see light." When God is before us, there is motive and there is meaning in our efforts after truth; intelligence is possible, and discovery is hopeful. Without the central light of God's Presence we are at the best but prisoners groping in a dark dungeon from which there is no possible escape, for its doors lead no whither.

Let me return to some further considerations of the process by which human knowledge has been gained, this interaction of the three branches of inquiry which men have been bound to pursue. It is necessary that men's labour should have been directed at different periods primarily towards one or other of these three fields. Doubtless we would like to prescribe that it should have been always equally distributed; but it has not been so.

It is an indication of our own mental limitations that we so readily and so passionately associate ourselves with the objects which we have most at heart. We judge others, it may be, as their interests are the same as our own ; we depreciate that which we do not ourselves understand. We certainly look with contempt on any past age in which our own studies were not duly regarded, as being an age neglectful of its true interests. This is, I think, due to misunderstanding on our part. The process of human progress has depended on man's consciousness of his needs, not on the needs in themselves. At some periods man has mainly felt the advantages to be gained by an increased mastery over the outer world ; at other times he has been chiefly concerned with the arrangement of human society ; at other times, again, he has been driven to consider in the first place the foundations of the individual life. The work done in each of these spheres has been equally necessary for the maintenance or development of the fabric as a whole. Success in one direction has liberated energy to pass into another channel. Knowledge has grown by the interaction of its several parts. Man himself, his powers of perception, his practical force, stands at the bottom of all ; and knowledge cannot transcend man's demand for it or appreciation of it.

Let me illustrate my meaning by an instance on a conspicuous scale. The dominion of Rome was a period when the organization of society stood in the foremost place of man's endeavour. Those branches of knowledge flourished which were strictly practical and were adopted to help this organization. But the prevalence of this purely practical spirit withdrew men's attention from themselves. They accepted life and its sphere of action as things given.



Their sense of personal responsibility and of duty slowly diminished, till the Roman Empire fell, because men were not strong enough to maintain the splendid civilization which they had created. In the reconstruction which followed, the individual man had to be built up to new strength; and this was the work of the Christian Church, a work which continued throughout the period of the Middle Ages. It is often said that during this epoch theology killed art, literature, and science, and long kept them in bondage. This is a most unscientific explanation of what took place. Art, literature, and science need for their growth a stable condition of society; a class which has leisure to observe, and think, and express its thoughts; and a leisured class which can appreciate the results so obtained and apply them. In a time of general dissolution, of rapid political change, of invasion and consequent misery, both these classes necessarily disappear. A few gifted individuals produce no effect. There can be no revival till society revives. Barbarian invaders had to be civilized; the foundations of common life had to be made good; human character had to be tempered anew for fresh efforts. This was a long process, and it required all the energies which could be produced. Thought was theological, because the great object to be dealt with was the individual man, who could only be fitted for his task by a stern enforcement of the meaning of life, expressed in such a form as would regulate his conduct and discipline his rude self-will. As this process was successful in founding a settled society, room was slowly found for other energies. First literature and art gave an expression to the personal side of life, to man's emotions and passions, to his varying moods, to the finer shades of feeling. Then, and not till then, did man return to the



investigation of the world around him, because not till then had he recovered the power to do so. Medieval Theology was, in fact, the mother of Modern Science ; for she trained man once more to an orderly life, formed a stable basis for society, and so liberated intellectual energy for progress in a field which did not at once invite him, or promise at first the rich harvest which we now enjoy.

I have sketched the history of modern knowledge in its largest outline. One point is worthy of further notice. There were, of course, at all times the same questionings of the human mind ; and there was always some sort of answer ready. In the light of fuller knowledge we are tempted to smile at the explanations of natural phenomena, and of the origin of things, given in times when the methods of investigation by which alone natural science can grow were unknown or unused. We think them so ludicrous that we scarcely believe them to have been given in good faith. We despise the ideas which suggested such explanations, and waive them aside as unworthy of our attention. In this, again, we follow an impulse which is not founded on understanding. Mankind were busy on a particular work, to which all their energies were devoted. They were possessed of knowledge which was true for the particular purpose which they had in hand. There were other subjects, to which they could not turn their attention, which nevertheless suggested questions and raised problems. These questions were answered, and these problems were solved, necessarily by reference to the truth which men possessed. So the problems of nature were explained by inferences from theology. These explanations were frequently wrong, because their inferences were not justified. They explained by inference from one branch of truth what could

only be explained by observation of itself. So when the new methods came into use and produced their results, they found men satisfied with explanations which were only partially true, yet claimed to draw their validity from what was certainly true. There was some natural irritation and misunderstanding before the meaning of what was happening became clear. Both sides claimed the exclusive possession of truth, and did not stop to consider the relation between knowledge and truth. When science was not known, theology, starting from the truth which she possessed, gave an imperfect answer to some problems which science only could solve. There followed a time in which science retaliated by undertaking to give, from the truth which it had obtained, a still more imperfect answer to some problems which theology only could solve. I have been attempting to show you that knowledge advances in different directions at different periods. One branch of it is not opposed to another branch. It is only the limitation of our outlook which prevents us from seeing the growth of truth from the additions which are made on all sides to the sum of man's knowledge.

There is yet another point to which I would call your attention. As we look back upon the past, the process which we trace seems like the growth of a mighty river, fed by many little rills which have their origin in obscure and desolate regions, whence man would not at first expect to find profit. Yet we are also conscious that there were fountains which sprung up where men were seeking for water, and once gave promise of abundant supply, which have nevertheless ceased to flow. There have been movements of thought, there has been patient research, which has had a long and laborious course to run before it reached

the point where it was recognized as part of the great fertilizing current of the world's knowledge. There have also been movements of thought which have promised great things, and yet have dried up and been unproductive. It is well to take note of this, lest we fall into an arrogant optimism of believing that anything that is done, or thought, or said, in the name of knowledge, is in itself an addition to man's abiding store. It is not so. The pursuit of knowledge teaches reverence and humility, teaches the vast gulf between the plausibility which wishes to make a show of wisdom, and the sincere desire to reach only what is true. With the growth of education amongst us has come, first of all, an increased power of expression; and with this a sort of belief that anything which can be expressed has a corresponding reality. I need not remind you that the substitution of fancies for facts, the pursuit of objects which are beyond man's power, the search for knowledge by fantastic ways, the longing to transcend rather than investigate nature—these have been oftentimes the signs of a mental malady which has palsied the progress of science. The pursuit of knowledge requires for its success seriousness, sobriety, a sense of limitation, above all a sense of relationship to universal truth.

Again, I am brought back to the conception of the unity of truth, because without this conception no grasp of knowledge, even in particulars, seems to me possible. And this unity of knowledge is only to be found in God, the Creator of the world, the Author of its harmony, who has given to man the power of understanding, and of identifying himself with, the order which he perceives around him. "In Thy light shall we see light."

For the process, which I have attempted to sketch as

the process of the world's development in knowledge, is one which is reproduced in each individual's experience. Truth is not a deposit which we enter upon without any effort of our own; it has to be appropriated, recognized, taken into our being, made operative for our individual self. All truth comes to us as a revelation. We receive it at first from outside; we make it our own by reflection, by observation, by experiment, till we find it luminous, and enthrone it as director of our life. The individual receives this revelation from divers sources, which correspond to his powers of perception. From science comes a revelation of nature; from history, and its results expressed in the community of which he forms a part, comes a revelation of man; from life and its experiences comes a revelation of self. These form parts of an expanding series—self, the world of man, the world of nature. But all these are connected, and become coherent by the revelation of God contained in Scripture. That revelation is like the others, progressive, for it is the revelation of a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ; and that Person is the centre of all other revelations, the point to which they run. In Him is found the meaning of the life of the individual. In Him is the life of men—"All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that hath been made." In Him man discovers the law of his life, and is at peace with himself. In Him man is united with his fellows in the glorious sonship of the sons of God. In Him man takes his place in the outer world to which he is so closely allied—a world which is not alien from the Lord, but which He framed, and whose life comes from Him.

Let me quote the words of one to whom science was as familiar as theology. "As we stand between things

above and things below, and our knowledge, like our nature, partakes of both, the truth which we recognize must lead us either upwards or downwards. It has always been hard for man to stand erect while discarding the truth of God sent down from heaven. It was hard of old, while he seemed to himself to be an independent being, severed by an impassable chasm from all lower things, and therefore able to pursue a separate perfection. But now as the chasm closes, and earth's full force is permitted to act on man, it becomes impossible for him to lift his head in his ancient dignity, unless there be a countervailing force from on high. . . . Nothing less will avail than the true God in the heavens, truly known, as He is known to His Church, in His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

You will feel the weight of these words. You will recognize that our pursuit of knowledge demands a central truth round which all gathers, and by reference to which all is explained. Without this, each group of students, while proclaiming a little cosmos within the sphere of their own observations, only herald in a universal chaos. Their scanty light only shows prevailing darkness. The exercise of their reason only discloses an irrational universe. Man's power is glorified for a moment only to be permanently debased. Apart from God, as revealed in Christ, there is no true order, no abiding law which runs through all things.

"In Thy light shall we see light." Even so, O Lord, "lighten Thou mine eyes that I may see the wondrous things of Thy law"—that law, the extent of which is being continually made known, but which only becomes more wondrous as it binds me more closely with all things, and all more closely with Thee.



# CHRISTIAN UNITY.





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*(Preached before the University of Oxford.)*

“Forbearing one another in love ; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”—EPH. iv. 2, 3.

THERE can, I think, be little doubt that by the “unity of the spirit” St. Paul means not a unity of mind and will within man’s spiritual nature, but the unity of the Body of Christ produced amongst its members by the operation of the Holy Spirit of God. This, in fact, is the great work of the Holy Spirit in the world, repairing, restoring, healing, uniting, fostering all those qualities which make for oneness—love, joy, peace, and the like. The Divine purpose, as set forth in Scripture, was the gradual exhibition to man of what he was potentially, and what he might therefore become in fact. The supreme revelation was made in the Person of the Lord, upon whom all eyes were to be fastened, and from whom all truth was to flow. The prayer of Jesus for those who believed on Him in all times was that “they may all be one ; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us : that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.” The Holy Spirit was to lead the Church “into all the truth ; for He shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you.” Such

knowledge was universal in its nature. Before every man was to be set the same destiny ; to every man was to be given strength to pursue it. What more potent means of ensuring unity could be devised than the revelation of life, as having the same end for all, and the assurance of the same means for obtaining it ?

So it might seem, and so it might be ; but it has not been. The vision of Christ's Church, united in massive strength, speaking with one voice, marching with equal step, penetrating human society by its splendid unanimity, convincing by its unswerving loyalty—this vision has floated with alluring charm before the eyes of many fervent Christians, but has, alas ! never been realized. Men love to imagine that there was a time when such an ideal prevailed ; they choose to animate their own efforts by the belief that they are restoring the past rather than making the future. " The unity of the Spirit " is something which has still to be realized, which never existed before. How are we, then, to account for the apparent failure of our Lord's prayer for His Church ? for this discrepancy between the end proposed and the actual attainment ? It is a question which may well be asked, and it deserves an answer.

First, then, I would call your attention to a principle of interpretation, which is often overlooked, that the words of our Lord deal with eternal truth, and not with its partial manifestation. " That all may be one." He could pray for no less ; for it is the end of His Church's activity, the goal which it must strive to attain. The setting forth of the Kingdom could not be blurred by any parentheses which spoke of human limitations ; it must be exhibited in all its unapproachable loftiness. We see the loftiness, and are at once attracted by it. All that is godlike in us responds to

its appeal. Then, as meditation dies away, we sadly murmur that past ignorance, or lack of zeal—something which we with our superior knowledge could have avoided—has caused present difficulties, of which we are the luckless victims. The same attraction has ever been present, the same appeal has always been heard; we in our turn fail, as our fathers failed before us—fail to do all that we might do with our greater insight and richer opportunities. Splendid possibilities are set before mankind in the gospel; but they are to be won by stern and severe detachment from things as they are, by resolute grasp on things as they may be. Only through much tribulation will either the individual or the Church enter upon the kingdom of God. The unity of the Spirit is a gift not to be grasped in a moment, but to be zealously sought and gradually bestowed. It is not the less real because it is not given at once.

In the next place, we must admit that the kingdom of heaven is set forth in Scripture as coming into sharp collision with the principles of the kingdom of the world. The Lord Himself was to be a principle of division, of separation. "Set for the falling and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which is spoken against, that thoughts out of many hearts should be revealed." His call to a higher state of self-consciousness necessitated an inward conflict, and an adjustment of outward relationships which involved a measure of strife. The Prince of Peace could say of Himself: "I came not to send peace, but a sword." It was inevitable that His message, His Person, His claims should be a cause of διαμερισμός, should separate, distinguish, sift among men. The immediate result of His manifestation was to awaken opposition; the new spirit could not prevail without rending the old bands. Struggle and effort

were necessary before the kingdom could take shape and set forth its meaning.

This conflict, it will be said, was against the evil world ; within the Church itself prevailed unity and peace. So it might have been expected *a priori* by the imaginative mind. But this expectation does not grasp the significance of the Divine teaching of the prevalence of sin, of the continuance of the power of the world's spirit even in the selected sphere of spiritual activity. It is impossible to overlook the profound warning given to all times by the presence of Judas amongst the Twelve. The exclamation, "Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" bears a mysterious testimony to the abiding power of evil in the most favoured places. Surely we cannot overestimate the value of this lesson to the Twelve in their after-life—its awful power both as a warning and a help against discouragement. For what are the facts revealed by the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles about the condition of the early Church? Nowhere do we find the picture of an ideal society. The beginnings of the kingdom were not merely humble in regard to the number and position of its adherents, but were disappointing in the lack of perfect power of combination, and in the failure to give an adequate representation of the meaning of the gospel. There was a splendid moment at the very first when "all that believed were together, and had all things common ; and day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread at home, they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." But the deceitfulness of a desire for fame penetrated almost immediately into their simple life, in the typical case of Ananias. Soon "there

was a murmuring of the Hellenists against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." Nay, there was even a sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas, who was the man most fitted to be their companion and sharer in their toils. Church life, almsgiving, patronage—all were beset with difficulties, even when the society was simple, when all could be known about every one, when there were no endowments, and men were to be chosen to a life of difficulty and danger.

Indeed, as we read St. Paul's letters to the Corinthian Church, we cannot escape a feeling of bewilderment. That men who could understand such lofty arguments, and respond to such spiritual appeals, should also need warnings and admonitions on rudimentary points of moral conduct, of reverence and decency, and of intellectual straightforwardness—this is certainly amazing. Why did they take the trouble to become Christians? Why did they undergo the social obloquy of separating themselves from ordinary life, if the only result was faction, discord, contradiction, and dispute amongst themselves? No sooner is the Church constituted than it is rent into contending parties. No sooner is the faith accepted than it is explained away. Why—if this was all that was to come of it—why did they not leave it alone?

It may be natural, from a modern point of view, to ask such questions; but a moment's reflection teaches us that in so doing we misunderstand the working of the Holy Spirit, and the Divine method of dealing with mankind. God's message found its point of attachment to men as they were. It appealed to them first as an explanation of the meaning of their individual lives. It pointed out new possibilities. How far these were realized depended on the

individual's submission to the guidance of the Spirit of God. The new man was to be put on ; the new relationship was to be adopted. The new truth was to be intellectually assimilated and made morally effective by each individual convert. The bands which bound the whole community together depended on the completeness with which its separate members lent themselves to this process. And men were fitful, wilful, wayward ; they stopped at various points ; they erected the limitations of which they themselves were conscious into insuperable barriers for all. There is deep pathos in St. Paul's recognition of practical obstacles when he wrote, " If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men." Peace was the promised blessing of the Lord's coming, it was the heritage which He left with His faithful ones ; but it was still far off, not to be found, save with conscious effort, and by much struggle, here and now.

The history of the early ages of the Church is similarly one of conflict without and within. The Church had to endure persecution ; it had to uphold the historic Christ against attempts to explain Him away. First, the power of the world would have none of Him. Then the wisdom of the world would read Him into terms of its own thought. The spiritual gifts of ghostly strength, of knowledge, understanding and counsel, were needed to the full. Unity was put in the background till the struggle was over, and was then called in to secure the fruits of victory. But what was then set up as the ideal, and was successfully pursued, was not the unity of the Spirit, but a uniformity borrowed from the organization of the Roman empire. The " Pax Romana," as it had been in things temporal, was applied to things spiritual, and was often open to the same criticism, "*ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.*"



Yet we should be entirely wrong in thinking that the majestic fabric of the medieval Church did not make room for widely divergent opinions and practices. When it was strongest it was most tolerant, and was always agitated by conflicts. It found room for almost everything; superstition and piety lived side by side; there was great latitude of opinion, and even of organization; regulars contended with seculars; the parish priest loudly complained about the intrusions of the friars; emperors warred against popes, and councils deposed them. It was only in the middle of the fifteenth century that organization, as such, became supreme; and the object of organization was to maintain itself according to its own definitions. The revolt of the sixteenth century was not against the large system of earlier times, but against restrictions recently imposed, against the overweening authority of a bureaucracy whose efforts had been skilfully directed to convert a constitutional monarchy into a tyranny. The revolution against this authority was a matter of great difficulty; for in most countries the existing system of the Church was upheld by the power of the State for political reasons, and sought to reduce the rebels to obedience by coercion. Hence the leaders of the revolution were driven to make good their position in the face of a threatening enemy, with whom no terms were possible short of absolute submission. If they were to survive, it must be by gathering a party avowedly in opposition to what existed. Their strength lay in the novelty, the audacity, and the sweeping character of their opinions. It was the misfortune of the systems which came into being in the sixteenth century that they were primarily polemical, and were developed in a spirit of conscious antagonism to what had been before. The exercise of private judgment

was variously influenced by the necessities of the opposition, and the nature of political conditions, in various localities. The first requirement was that a system should be such as to obtain adherents and bind them together.

I have recalled these obvious facts, because they may help us to estimate the position in which we stand at present. We deplore the divisions among Christ's people; we see that they are contrary to that "unity of the Spirit," which unquestionably we ought to seek. Let us consider some of the main elements in the problem which may guide our own endeavours.

First of all, we should beware of exaggerating the differences which exist amongst Christians. They are not comparable to those which agitated the early ages of the Church. Broadly speaking, they do not concern the great fundamental truths of the faith. Christians are at one in maintaining the historic Christ as the supreme revelation of God. They are united in opposing all attempts to explain away the Apostolic teaching about His Person, the efficacy of His Atonement, the need of faith in Him, and the communication of His life to the individual soul by the Holy Spirit. The points in which they differ are about the means whereby these truths are to be set forth in the world, to be taught and brought home to men, and be expressed as an abiding testimony to all ages. As we look round Christendom we are bound to recognize that, in spite of our divisions, there does exist a large measure of unity of faith, wrought by the Spirit of God. There is much to fill us with hope.

But, if we must not overestimate, neither may we underestimate, our differences or their importance. Their importance lies in this, that they are concerned with practice,



with the direction of our activities at every turn. Now, differences in speculative opinion are not so keenly felt, because they are not so perpetually apparent, as are differences about methods of action. It is quite true that Christians are agreed about the main truths which they wish to set forth ; and this very fact makes their unity at once desirable and obvious, something which seems to be within reach of easy attainment. But in practice there are different views of the best, or of the permissible, forms of organizing the Christian body for the purpose of bearing its testimony to the truth which all are agreed on. It must be admitted that the very triviality of the points in dispute, compared with the greatness of the matter at issue, is a natural cause of irritation. It is not great things, but little things, which try us most, which, in fact, make up life's probation. A man may, with excellent temper and discretion, maintain in public life important principles, while he is unable to show the same charity and self-control about some trifling question which only concerns the arrangement of domestic life. A man of admirable large-mindedness in a committee may be irritable and despotic at home ; where he is dealing with large affairs, in which many interests obviously clash, he may be calm and judicial ; where there is a contest between his will and that of another in a matter of minor consequence, he may be resolved to have his own way because it is his own. We must recognize the fact that the most serious quarrels arise about trifles, just because they are trifles.

Yet these things are trifling only to the speculative reason ; in practice they are inevitably important. Belief in truth involves a desire to set it forth, and this has to be done under the limitations which action involves. Truth

cannot be made operative in an abstract form ; it must perforce be applied to existing conditions of life and thought. The loftier the claims of truth on man's obedience, the more definitely it must be expressed. If its effects are to be far-reaching in their influence on character, it must be carefully and clearly applied at every stage of the development of character, and must speak with authority. It must be embodied in institutions which work according to method and system. When there are rival institutions, each claims that its method and system is the best, and some sense of collision is unavoidable. This is obvious ; and when we look back upon the past we see how large has been the waste of energy consequent on warfare between Christian bodies. We are wearied of this conflict : we wish most earnestly to be rid of its disastrous results. How is this to be accomplished ?

No step can be taken in this direction without a reasonable survey of the actual cause of these differences, and of what lies behind them. The organization of the Christian Church took shape in early times, and undertook very wide functions for the education and direction of its members. There came a point when it was felt that this direction was exercised for the good of the ecclesiastical system, as a part of the political organization of Europe, rather than for the spiritual training of mankind. The difficulty of detaching the Church, as a political power, from the Church as a spiritual influence, led in many quarters to an entire abandonment of the historical system, and the adoption of other systems which seemed to be free from the same objections, and to be adapted to the conditions of the time. In most cases these reforms claimed to return to early stages in the development of the ecclesiastical system, before the abuses

of which men complained had begun to show themselves. The Church of England retained the historic framework, and merely removed late accretions. Presbyterianism claimed to go back to a time when Bishops were not. Independency went back still further to a time when each separate body of converts managed its own affairs. The Baptists, going beyond organization, set up a Church of the converted as opposed to any visible body of believers. It is a common taunt that the number of Christian organizations is very large; but this is really unfair, as there are no other principles of organization except these stated, and it is obvious that the principle of Independency covers any number of local varieties which are found convenient.

But behind these points of organization lie corresponding differences in the method of training the spiritual life of the community, and of its individual members. Religion in its simplest aspect is concerned with the establishment of a conscious relationship between God and the individual soul. Systems differ in their starting-point for this purpose, and in the means which they offer for the support and enlargement of this relationship. Christians may agree about the primary truths which they would teach; they differ in the motives to which they appeal, and in the methods which they recommend.

These are plain facts, which have to be faced. No good can come from trying to put them aside. It is perfectly true that "our common Christianity," which cannot be too strongly recognized, supplies a basis for intellectual agreement. It is also true that the moral energy which springs from spiritual conviction is agreed about philanthropic work and social reform. But between these two lies the whole sphere of the training of the spiritual life, and the formation

of religious character. If the Church were the custodian of a philosophy, we need not differ. If the Church were a society for doing good, we need not differ. But the Church is the Body of Christ, the representative of its Incarnate Lord, drawing its life from Him, and ministering what it has first received. This is a conception which cannot be abandoned; can we wonder that it has been imperfectly realized, and has been imperilled by human frailty and self-will?

We all long for the restoration of unity. It is a far-off prospect, and we can only hope and pray. But one or two thoughts occur to me from what I have been endeavouring to put before you.

First, we cannot hope to restore unity by belittling our conception of the Church. We are a practical people, and we live in a practical age. Toleration is prescribed as a specific. Would that its claims had always been understood as they were set forth by the Apostle, "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"! It was the loosening of the bond which caused untold mischief, when unity was pursued at the sacrifice of peace. Toleration, however, does not mean a genial disregard of differences, but a just perception of them, and a desire to deal with them in a spirit of fairness. It means the removal of hatred and prejudice, and so prepares the way for a godly union and concord. But union and concord cannot be assumed; they have to be established on a ground which is strewn with the ruins of past conflicts.

Can the ground be any further cleared? I think this can best be done by carefully defining existing differences, and clearly understanding the reasons on which they are founded. The attempt to establish agreement on the basis

of sentiment seems to me doomed to failure, for the reasons which I have already given. Neither speculative agreement on the fundamental truths of Christianity, nor practical agreement about the duties of the Christian conscience towards society will bring us together. The real reason of difference lies in different conceptions of the Church and its functions. Each religious body ought to be able to justify its existence by setting forth its conception, not as the result of historical accident, or the influence of some dominant personality, but as resting on some inherent principle of necessary truth. If every religious body strongly and persistently asserted its fundamental basis, and impressed it steadfastly upon all its members, we should be much nearer to agreement than we are. So long as we pick up our differences as we find them, and make good our own position in antagonism to that of another, we can make no advance. This attitude arose in the past because each system strove to make itself absolute within a particular sphere. "*Cujus regio ejus religio*" was not merely a maxim of political expediency; it corresponded to a deep-seated desire. "Let us have any form of religion, provided it be only one," was a point on which all agreed; but the contest raged, which one was it to be? This is true of England as much as elsewhere; each religious body was founded on the supposition that it must ultimately prevail and reign alone. Though this hope has disappeared as a practical possibility, it has left its mark behind. There is a certain unreality in some of the pleas for tolerance, for tolerance was undoubtedly an afterthought. If we can conceive every religious body condemned in fact, as it is assuredly condemned in reason, to live on its positive and not on its negative teaching, to be judged by its own contents and not

by its criticism of other systems, a great deal of irrelevant matter would doubtless pass away.

The precept which comes first in my text is noticeable in its connection with what follows. "Forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We will not reach the second until we realize the first. Loving forbearance—if this is possible towards sinners, surely it is not impossible towards those who are following the Lord Jesus, though it be in a way which we do not think to be the best. Outward and visible union need not be pursued in the first place; it will come in its own time. But at least we may rid ourselves of internecine warfare as already condemned. Christians must see and understand one another; and for this purpose mutual distrust and suspicion must be broken down. Systems must be judged, not by traditional records which embody antiquated prejudices, but by actual observation grounded on sympathy. Any definite schemes of reunion are premature, and in themselves are liable to create suspicion. The line of progress seems to me to lie in the direction of removing from differences all that is not essential, all that is not inherent in the principles on which they rest. They are the result of historical causes; they have largely developed among political surroundings; they express fears which once were real, but no longer have the same validity; they rest upon past antagonisms which have lost their meaning. For instance, English Nonconformity grew up in contradiction to the general belief that it was a matter of political necessity for England to be absolutely uniform in religious practice. This belief has long since passed away; but the old arguments about the connection between Church and State are constantly repeated, though



the nature of that connection has entirely changed. The Church is no longer a model which the State endeavours to impose on all its subjects ; it is the organ of the nation for religious purposes. The recognition of such a national organ is no longer incompatible with perfect freedom of voluntary combination amongst individuals of a like mind. In the same way the Roman Church was for a long while regarded, and justly regarded, as an insidious power, which was plotting against our national liberty. She has now lost her political power ; but the impression produced on the national mind still exists. Religious controversy is clogged by antiquated arguments, by the perpetual recurrence of prejudices, which once were justified, but no longer correspond to facts. The hope of the future lies in our capacity of facing things as they really are, without exaggeration on the one side and without vague attempts to dissolve principles into sentiment on the other.

The Church of Christ is the abode of His Spirit, which operates silently upon the hearts and consciences of men. The growth of God's kingdom is gradual. It is through trial and conflict that we enter upon a larger and serener life. It may be that differences are necessary to teach us the full meaning of the truth committed to us. This, at least, we must confess, that differences arise from an imperfect hold on that truth in its fulness. When we consider the varieties of national character, of intelligence, of natural surroundings, of the conditions of human life, we see the difficulty of any one system which would be universally effective. How far human frailty is to be tolerated, what place is to be given to fancy and emotion, what are the intellectual limits of assent,—these are practical questions of momentous importance, which are all involved in our religious differences.

They can only be determined by common discussion and by kindly criticism. We may all admit that we have something to learn and something to teach. We need, above all things, humility and fair-mindedness. Let us seek more earnestly these gifts, and commit ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God, that He may "lead us into all the truth."

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